

Learning to Play Scots Fiddle:  
An Adult Learning Perspective

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1999



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## Abstract

This thesis examines how adults learn to play Scots fiddle. It focuses on a group of adults who are members of an intermediate-standard fiddle class in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland. The class is part of the wider contemporary phenomenon in Scotland whereby traditional music is being taught on the fiddle and other instruments in evening classes, workshops and residential courses. Although the current investigation is located within the field of ethnomusicology, insights are also drawn from modern adult learning theory.

A review of related literature reveals that, hitherto, studies which have considered settings in which traditional music is formally taught have often chosen to focus on the role of the teacher. As a consequence, considerable emphasis has been given to the concept of transmission. I argue here, however, that the ethnomusicologists' prevailing view of transmission as a transfer of information from a teacher to those being taught may not be the most appropriate framework through which to consider learning, and particularly so where adult learners are concerned. If we are to deepen our understanding of how people learn to play traditional music, we need to understand in greater depth the learner's perspective.

This study took place in two stages -- a pilot investigation and a core study. In the pilot stage, the researcher attended a fiddle class as a participant observer for one year. This stage highlighted the central importance of seeking insights from the learner's point of view. In the core phase, the researcher conducted a detailed investigation, during one term of fiddle classes, into how six adults from the class were learning the instrument. A particular focus was on the practice that the learners undertook at home. Semistructured interviews and a questionnaire, as well as a tape diary and a written diary which were kept by the learners, were used to collect data.

The results of the study shed significant insights into the complexity of practice and the importance of this activity for learning the fiddle. The findings also highlight the variable and individual nature of the learning process. In turn, this underlines the inadequacy of the traditionally held view of transmission as a framework for understanding how instrumental skills are taught and learned. The implications arising from this investigation for conceptual understanding in ethnomusicology, adult music education and the formal tuition of traditional music in Scotland are discussed, and topics for further research are indicated.

## Acknowledgements

Warm thanks are due firstly to my two supervisors at the University of Edinburgh -- Dr. Mark Trewin at the School of Scottish Studies and Faculty of Music, and Dr. Fred Forster at the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment -- for their support and encouragement throughout the duration of this study. I would also like to thank staff and students at the School of Scottish Studies for their thoughtfulness over the past few years. Special mention here goes to the Director, Dr. Margaret Mackay; Dr. Emily Lyle; my postgraduate colleagues Meredith Harley and Dr. Gillian Munro; and to Neil MacQueen for his help in making the compact disc which accompanies the thesis.

Outwith the University of Edinburgh, others to whom I am indebted include Dr. Peter Cooke, Peggy Duesenberry, Dr. Catherine Shoupe, Dr. Richard Allen, and particularly Jo Miller for encouraging me to undertake postgraduate study. Thanks, too, go to my parents, Colin and Dorothy Campbell, my brother Colin, and Iain Knox for their support. I am also particularly grateful for the financial assistance I received from the British Federation of Women Graduates, the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, the Helen Doig Bursary, the M O Taylor Bequest, and the Anglo-Norse Society.

Additional thanks go to James Alexander, Donald Barr, Gordon Easton, Iain Fraser, Angus Grant (senior), Bert Murray and Rob Paul for agreeing to be informally interviewed during the early stages of my research, and to Dave Francis and Ewan McVicar for their assistance. Stan Reeves and the staff and committee members at the Adult Learning Project, Edinburgh, were also most helpful. Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Alison, Roy, Andy, Jim G., Jim M. and Ken for taking part in the core investigation.

# Table of Contents

	Page
Statement of authorship.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
List of figures.....	vi
List of illustrations.....	vii
Notes on the thesis.....	viii
 <b>Introduction.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
 <b>Chapter One: Learning the Fiddle in Scotland.....</b>	 <b>10</b>
Historical and literary sources ♦ Aural sources ♦ Revival ♦ Summary of Chapter One	
 <b>Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature.....</b>	 <b>40</b>
Need for studies of teaching and learning ♦ Focus of previous work ♦ Adult learning ♦ The process of learning ♦ Summary of Chapter Two	
 <b>Chapter Three: Methodology.....</b>	 <b>72</b>
The pilot investigation ♦ The core investigation ♦ Summary of Chapter Three	
 <b>Chapter Four: The Learners.....</b>	 <b>106</b>
An introduction to participants ♦ Perceptions of the teacher ♦ Practice ♦ Participation in the core investigation ♦ Summary of Chapter Four	
 <b>Chapter Five: The Learning Process.....</b>	 <b>150</b>
Andy's practice sessions ♦ Roy's practice sessions ♦ Jim G.'s practice sessions ♦ Jim M.'s practice sessions ♦ Alison's practice sessions ♦ Ken's practice sessions ♦ Reflections on the practice profiles ♦ Summary of Chapter Five	
 <b>Chapter Six: Implications.....</b>	 <b>217</b>
Conceptual understanding in ethnomusicology ♦ Adult music education ♦ The tuition of traditional music ♦ Summary of Chapter Six	
 <b>Chapter Seven: Conclusions.....</b>	 <b>258</b>
 Bibliography.....	 264

<b>Appendix</b>		<b>Page</b>
Appendix 1	Examples of groups which offer fiddle tuition to adults.....	275
Appendix 2	Adult Learning Project enrolment form.....	276
Appendix 3	Summary of the biographical details of the core investigation participants.....	277
Appendix 4	i. Copy of the tape diary guidance sheet.....	278
	ii. List of contents of the accompanying compact disc.....	279
	iii. Copy of the written diary guidance sheet.....	282
	iv. Sample of extracts from the written diaries.....	283
Appendix 5	i. Interview One questions.....	285
	ii. Interview Two questions.....	287
Appendix 6	i. Copy of letter sent to Scots Music Organising Group Committee.....	290
	ii. Copy of letter of invitation sent to study participants.....	291
	iii. List of recorded interviews undertaken during the core investigation.....	293
	iv. List of other interviews.....	294
Appendix 7	Transcriptions of tunes .....	295

## List of Figures

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 3.1 Summary diagram of the core investigation.....	88
Figure 5.1 List of the tunes that Roy can play by ear.....	162
Figure 5.2 List of the tunes that Roy is learning to play by ear.....	163
Figure 5.3 Ken's transcription of the tune "Pretty Peggy" .....	191
Figure 5.4 "Learning by numbers": Fingerings added by Ken to the "Shetland Fiddlers' Society" .....	191
Figure 5.5 Table showing typical format of home practice.....	201

## List of Illustrations

		Page
1	Gordon Easton and his wife, Isobel.....	24
2	Bert Murray.....	24

## **Notes on the Thesis**

A compact disc accompanies this thesis. It contains extracts of material obtained from the "tape diary" -- one of the methods used to collect data in the core investigation. Detailed information on the tape diary may be found in Chapter Three, and a list of the contents of the CD may be found in Appendix 4.

In order to give some degree of anonymity to those who took part in the core investigation, participants are known by their first names only and also, where appropriate, by the initial of their surnames. The initials "KC" which appear in Chapters Four and Five have been used to refer to the researcher. Lastly, in the transcriptions of the recorded interviews which appear throughout the thesis, I have tried to represent, as closely as possible, the spoken dialect of each individual.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years in Scotland, new settings have appeared in which the fiddle can be learned. These take the form of evening classes, workshops and longer residential courses. Such classes are termed “formal” here (see definition below), and they represent a change from the ways in which the fiddle was previously learned in Scotland. Many of the evening classes on the instrument are to be found in urban areas, and learning in such classes normally takes place in groups. One hallmark of these formal classes is that many of those in attendance are adults. A review of related literature reveals that such settings, and those learning in them, have hitherto been largely neglected by researchers.

This thesis focuses on six adults who were learning to play the fiddle in an intermediate-standard fiddle group which took place in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland. The boundaries of this thesis, however, are wider than the field investigation alone. In contrast to much previous ethnomusicological work, this research attempts to address the *process of learning* -- taken here to mean a developmental process, based on experience, that causes a change in behaviour (Peters and Miller, 1982). Furthermore, both the field study and the associated review of literature have led the researcher to question the *concept of transmission* which has hitherto assumed a dominant place in the ethnomusicological literature dealing with the teaching and learning of music.

Another aspect of this study is that it considers how people practice the fiddle in an environment in which they normally practice: their homes. This standpoint of exploring a human activity in its natural context needs little justification in the modern-day field of ethnomusicology, where work is invariably grounded in “the field”. However, when practice is investigated under the disciplinary banner of



psychology, it is likely to be explored by way of closely monitored experimentation procedures in a laboratory environment. Individuals may well be requested to practise set, graded pieces with which they are unfamiliar within a certain time-span, for instance. To the psychologist who investigates practice, then, the approach taken here of studying practice in its natural context may seem somewhat curious. Nevertheless, I hope to show that this approach can be rewarding.

Moreover, although this thesis is conceived primarily as a work which contributes to the field of ethnomusicological study, the view is also taken that the theme of adults learning a new skill -- in this case the fiddle -- can be helpfully viewed as an example of the wider phenomenon emerging in the Western world of *lifelong learning*. Contributions have therefore also been drawn from literature on adult education.

It is also necessary to make explicit in this introduction the fact that the adult learners analysed and investigated in my research were not professional or highly accomplished fiddle players, but rather were music-makers who were learning to play the instrument in their private time for their own enjoyment and self-satisfaction, as well for the enjoyment of others. Neither did the majority of the learners have a family background in fiddle playing. However, most of these learners had been involved in listening to traditional music for a substantial part of their lives.

These learners might be best termed “music-makers” rather than “musicians”, as the definition of a *musician*, *per se*, is problematic (Merriam, 1964). It is also culturally dependent. In Western society, for example, it is often taken for granted that “musicians” refer to a class of “professional” instrumentalists when such a term is discussed, though this may not be what we intend. Likewise, how one separates and defines the activities of the amateur and professional musician is also difficult.

Merriam (1964:125), for example, contends: "It is difficult to know at what point professionalism begins and ends, and the problem of precise definition is as apparent in our own society as it is in others."

Nevertheless, it is now widely accepted among scholars, for example Finnegan (1989), that it is as important to explore the activities of the "amateur" musician as those of the "professional" if we are to understand the values and perceptions held by all sets of music-makers in varying contexts. Equally, the fact that informants may not come from a family of traditional musicians, something which is very often set as a partial selection criterion for scholars investigating traditional music, should not exclude them from study. In a similar vein Nettl asserts:

. . . besides the excellent, the outstanding, who represents the musical ideal in composition or performance, we need understanding of the ordinary but musically acceptable person . . . . It is such people who comprise the real mainstream of musical life in the world, make music a cultural and human universal, constitute the acceptable everyday experience of a culture. (1983:279)

Indeed, it is such adult learners as those investigated in this study who are contributing a great deal to the contemporary culture of traditional music in Scotland, especially in urban areas. These individuals, apart from attending fiddle classes, may be found playing in sessions in pubs and bars in cities in Scotland, attending concerts, purchasing recorded music, and often practising and playing the fiddle with great enthusiasm.

In the present era when learning is emphasised as a lifelong activity and also as a desirable orientation for individuals, and when there has been a decrease in the hours spent in paid employment and an increase in leisure time, it is understandable why adults might wish to learn a musical instrument as a pastime which can make a

valuable and aesthetic contribution to their lives. It is apparent, too, that this phenomenon promises to grow in years to come. Peters and Miller (1982:209), for example, contend: "The idea of 'lifelong learning' is taking hold as the society grays. The push for a 'youth society' is slowly giving way to a more traditional attitude toward aging." Knowing more about how adult learners learn to play a musical instrument -- the focus of the present study -- may therefore be of considerable practical value to adult educators. It may also be useful to adults who are themselves learning to play a musical instrument, as these individuals may be able to relate their own learning experiences to those of other adult learners and to learn from them in return. Clearly, this category of learner strongly merits the attention of scholars.

#### *Motivation for this work*

The motivation to undertake this research stemmed from three areas of personal interest. The first is my own background and involvement in traditional music. As a result of growing up in the county of Morayshire in North East Scotland, I was fortunate to be part of a community and family environment where traditional music, and especially fiddle playing, were valued. Through taking part in Strathspey and Reel Societies, fiddle groups and competitions, albeit in the capacity of a bass player, I experienced first-hand, aspects of the fiddle tradition of North East Scotland such as the repertoire, the performers, and the contexts in which fiddle music is performed. Thus, although I was not originally a fiddler myself (though I began to learn the instrument for the purposes of this investigation), fiddle playing has occupied an important place in my life to date. Given this background, I might reasonably be described as an "insider" in the musical culture under investigation, and it is important to recognise at the outset that this status has methodological implications.

There has often been debate in ethnomusicology as to the relative merits of the researcher being an “insider” or an “outsider” in the culture which he or she studies. Over two decades ago, Nettl stated

. . . it is taken for granted that only in studying a culture foreign to himself can a scholar muster sufficient objectivity. By studying his own culture, he may be conditioned to too many prejudices and personal associations to be properly objective -- so many ethnomusicologists believe. (1971:3)

Since the 1970s, however, attitudes have changed and a greater number of scholars (including Nettl<sup>1</sup>) have come to the realisation that the insider approach is a valid way to collect data. Clearly, however, both insider and outsider approaches have their limitations. Burnim’s own experiences as a black ethnomusicologist undertaking research into gospel music among black people in the United States using the “insider approach”, for example, led her to conclude:

Whilst insider status may prove advantageous at various stages of the fieldwork process, these advantages alone do not necessarily compromise the degree of objectivity one achieves in field situations. Whether insider or outsider, the researcher faces a variety of personal, social, and political constraints. The effectiveness with which these constraints are handled are major determiners of the ultimate success of the field investigation. (1985:445)

As far as my motivation is concerned, the second reason for undertaking this investigation, which is again related to this insider role, stems from my own attempts at teaching traditional music on stringed instruments to adults and children alike. Such experiences have led me to become interested in how both adults and children approach the task of learning, in the role the teacher plays in the learning process for

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<sup>1</sup> See further, Nettl (1983:262) and Burnim (1985).

each, and in the different approaches that the teacher may need to adopt dependent on whether adults or children are the focus of the tuition.

The final reason behind this work relates to having had a number of years' experience as a postgraduate tutor in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Edinburgh. During this period, issues such as how to cope with the wide range of ages of adults who attended tutorial groups -- ranging from those who had just left school to those entering University as mature students -- and how to cope with the fact that students came from various backgrounds (e.g., some were home students while others were from overseas) -- emerged constantly. These encounters also sufficiently highlighted the practical difficulties of teaching a group of adult learners effectively. Thus, this investigation has been prompted by my own interest in learning and teaching as much as by my background in the Scots fiddle tradition.

#### *Explanation of key terms*

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of several key terms which are used recurrently throughout the thesis. Firstly, *traditional music* is the term used here to describe the type of music that the adults involved in this study were learning to play. The use and definition of the term "traditional music", and indeed its counterpart "folk music", have long been a contentious issue in ethnomusicology as well as in other disciplines. One of the problems with these terms relates to the fact that both mean many things and, as a result, it is difficult to define them adequately. Indeed, a notable instance arising from the debate about the usage of these terms is the International Folk Music Council's (IFMC) adoption of a new name, the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), in 1981 (Bohlman, 1988:xiii). This arose partly out of a dissatisfaction with the term "folk music". In the context of the present study, therefore, we must be aware that "traditional" music is by no

means an ideal term to use. However, it was one label that the practitioners involved in the study attached to the music they played and thus it seems valid to make use of it in this context. Generally speaking too, it is often the term which is used to describe much of the music that is played on the fiddle in Scotland. Further, as the focus of this investigation is on *how* people learn to play the fiddle rather than on *what* they learn to play, the definition of traditional music does not have a crucial bearing on the present work.

The term *Scots Fiddle* has also been employed in this study. It is commonly used amongst those involved in the Scots fiddle tradition and is employed here 1) to indicate the fact that the context of this research was on learning the fiddle in Scotland, and 2) to denote that the style of playing was primarily and particularly “Scottish”, as distinct from American or Irish, for example. This term is not meant to imply, however, that those learning the fiddle were playing repertoire solely associated with the music of Scotland.

The use of the term *adult* here has been adopted from the field of modern adult learning. Knowles (1980:24), for example, believes that, from an educational perspective, individuals who should be considered as adults are 1) those who behave as adults and who perform adult roles (a social definition) and 2) those whose self-concept is that of an adult (a psychological definition). An additional “operational definition” for the term adult is used in the context of the present study: those in attendance at classes specified as being for adults at the Adult Learning Project, the group that formed the focus of the field study.

Lastly, the terms *formal* and *informal*, used in an educational context, appear here. These are based on the ideas of Greenfield and Lave (1982:183) who outline the

idealised characteristics of these two types of education. Included in the characteristics of formal education, as defined by these two writers, are a variety of features: it is set apart from everyday life; there is a teacher who is responsible for imparting knowledge and skill; the teacher is not usually a relative and there is also an explicit pedagogy and curriculum. By contrast, informal education embraces the following: the learning is embedded in daily life activities; the learner is responsible for obtaining knowledge and skill which can be obtained from a wide array of stimuli and individuals; and there is little or no prescribed pedagogy or curriculum. In the present study, then, the term “formal” is used as a prefix to educational contexts in which the above characteristics of formal education generally apply and in which someone known specifically as “a teacher” directs those who are learning. “Informal” learning situations, however, represent educational contexts in which there is no identified teacher present.

#### *Outline of the thesis*

**Chapter One** sets the scene by outlining how the fiddle was learned in the past in Scotland. It then goes on to discuss the present-day contexts in which the fiddle can be learned.

**Chapter Two** is devoted to the review of related literature. It examines studies which have addressed the formal tuition of traditional music and looks particularly at *transmission* -- a key concept in much previous work. Pertinent literature from modern adult learning theory is also considered.

**Chapter Three** details the methodology used in this study. The methodology consisted of two distinct phases, termed the “pilot investigation” and the “core investigation” respectively. In the latter, data on learning was collected from six



adult learners using a tape diary, a written diary, semistructured interviews and a questionnaire survey.

**Chapter Four** presents the first part of the results from the core investigation. This chapter is based largely on the data obtained from the semistructured interviews. Brief portraits of the participants are given, and themes such as the motivations they had for learning the fiddle, their perceptions of good teaching practice, and their views about learning in a group situation are considered.

**Chapter Five** presents the second part of results from the core investigation. This chapter draws particularly on the tape diary and the written diary data. It looks principally at how each of the six learners practised the fiddle at home. Themes arising from the individual accounts of practice are analysed and discussed.

**Chapter Six** considers the implications arising from this work as a whole for: 1) our understanding of the concepts of transmission and practice in ethnomusicology, 2) those who teach music to adults, and 3) the formal tuition of traditional music. Topics that might be pursued in future research are also suggested.

**Chapter Seven**, lastly, reviews the principal findings of the research and presents some concluding remarks.



## CHAPTER ONE: LEARNING THE FIDDLE IN SCOTLAND

This chapter examines fiddle learning in Scotland past and present. Its purpose is to put the present investigation into context. The first section considers historical and literary sources which address the subject of learning the instrument. The second examines aural sources. Following this, the theme of learning in the context of the revival of the fiddle in the latter part of the twentieth century receives attention. In examining contemporary phenomena in this chapter, I have drawn on my own fieldwork experiences and on my “insider” knowledge of the Scots fiddle tradition, as well as on the discussions of other scholars.

### **Historical and literary sources**

The fiddle has long been a popular instrument in Scotland, and its music has been played in the country for more than half a millennium (Alburger,1996:11)<sup>1</sup>. Nowadays, the fiddle is identical to the modern violin but centuries ago its shape and form were quite different<sup>2</sup>. The name “fiddle”, however, has remained in use because of the associations that the instrument has with Scottish dance music (ibid.). Indeed, throughout its history in Scotland, the primary function of the fiddle has been for accompanying dance.

Whilst there is no text to date that has been devoted exclusively to an examination of how the fiddle was learned in Scotland prior to the twentieth century, the issue of fiddle learning is a recurrent theme in several publications<sup>3</sup>. Most of these consider how the well-known fiddlers and especially the major composers of fiddle music, learned their art, neglecting the majority who played the instrument but did not receive public acclaim. This is not surprising as much of the information that we

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<sup>1</sup> Texts which discuss the history of the fiddle in Scotland include Alburger (1996), Collinson (1966), Emmerson (1971), Hardie (1992), Hunter (1988), Johnson (1997) and Purser (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Johnson (1997:3) states that we cannot be certain when the violin reached Scotland. He believes that “1670 seems a likely date”, but notes that it may have been earlier.

<sup>3</sup> These include Alburger (1996), Collinson (1966), Hunter (1988), Johnson (1997) and Hardie (1992).

have about fiddle learning historically comes from comments made by observers (such as Martin Martin, see below) rather than from research explicitly undertaken on learning itself. From these various accounts, however, we can see that there were broadly three ways in which the fiddle was learned prior to approximately 1900 in Scotland. These were 1) obtaining lessons from a teacher, 2) learning in a family and community context and 3) being “self-taught”. More often than not, however, learning was achieved through a combination of two or all of these three methods.

An account from the late seventeenth century, for instance, mentions the existence of the untutored fiddler. Martin Martin, in his description of the Western Isles of Scotland, circa 1695, notes that the natives of Lewis “are great lovers of music; and when I was there they gave an account of eighteen men who could play on the violin pretty well without being taught: . . . ” (Macleod, 1994:95). William Marshall (1748-1833), the celebrated composer from Fochabers in Morayshire, also appears to have been a “self-taught violinist” (Emmerson, 1971:67). Niel Gow (1727-1807), from Perthshire, another well known composer of fiddle music, on the other hand, “started fiddling at nine; he taught himself, in the way of fiddlers, until he was about thirteen, when he received some instruction from John Cameron, a servant of Sir George Stewart of Grantully” (ibid:69). Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831), Niel Gow’s most famous son, also had lessons for a period and became a fiddle teacher himself later on:

He started his career with lessons on the same kit (a small fiddle, . . . ) as had been used by his father as a child, was then sent to Edinburgh for tuition under ‘Red Bob’ Mackintosh for a time, and also Alexander McGlashan. It is said that his first professional appearance was as cellist in McGlashan’s band; he studied cello with Joseph Reinagle. . . . He was not only a versatile instrumentalist but a well-educated musician, active in the vigorous musical life of the Edinburgh of his day, and in great demand as a teacher. (Emmerson, 1971:73)

The “Red Bob” mentioned above was Robert Mackintosh (b. circa 1745), who taught the fiddle in Edinburgh. He “charged one guinea per quarter for the ‘public’ class and one guinea per month for a ‘private hour’ . . .” (ibid.:66). Further, the “kit” that Nathaniel Gow started learning on, a practical substitute for a half-sized fiddle (Alburger, 1996:120), appears to have been quite often used by beginners. There are also several references to the kit having been used by dancing masters, most probably due to its portable nature (see, for instance, Cooke, 1986:19).

James Scott Skinner (1843-1927), the well-known fiddler and composer from Aberdeenshire started off learning in a family context. His brother Sandy began teaching him by ear at the age of six (Skinner, 1994). Skinner then progressed to having lessons from a teacher. In 1855 he began a six-year apprenticeship with Dr. Mark’s “Little Men”, an orchestra made up of children. In addition, he received lessons for a period from Rougier, a French violinist from the Paris Conservatoire who was also a member of the Hallé Orchestra.

The *Biographical Dictionary of Fiddlers* by Clarke (c. 1895) also makes references to how European as well as Scottish fiddlers learned their art. In addition, the work of Honeyman (c. 1910), which focuses on Scottish violin makers, includes summaries of how certain makers learned to play as well as to make fiddles. William Blair (1793-1884), a maker from Aberdeenshire, for instance, was “a pupil of Peter Hardie, of Dunkeld, in strathspey playing” and it was also from Hardie that he “received his first lessons in the art of violin making” (c. 1910:23).

Whether or not fiddlers received lessons, we know that, prior to 1680 all fiddle tunes would have been learned aurally, as no fiddle texts of Scots tunes survive from earlier than this date (Johnson, 1997:4). Johnson continues:

With the coming of the violin, however, fiddle lessons began to include instruction in staff notation, . . . Scots-fiddle pieces continued to be performed from memory, as had always been the custom; increasingly, however, players liked to own written copies, for occasional reference and to help them learn new tunes. (1997:6)

Indeed, during the eighteenth century, many fiddle tunes became available in print<sup>4</sup>. Alburger (1996:40) notes that 1726 witnessed the real beginnings of music publishing in Scotland, and from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, music publishers issued a considerable quantity of music for the violin, mostly of the dance type (Farmer, 1930-1:398). These printed collections must have had an influence not only on how some fiddlers learned their repertoire but also on what was actually learned, with certain pieces being popularised as a result of appearing in print. This point is reinforced by Johnson (ibid.) who maintains that printed collections were influential on fiddlers in the eighteenth century, as illiterate fiddlers could learn pieces by hearing others playing them. Nevertheless, according to Cooke (1986:126), the fiddle tradition in mainland Scotland in the eighteenth century continued to be principally aural.

Classical music also had quite an impact on fiddle playing during the eighteenth century. Johnson contends:

Most people do not realize how far Scottish folk-fiddle music was influenced by classical music: it is usually thought of as an indigenous growth, untouched by civilization, transmitted by illiterate farm workers and vagrant players. But in fact folk-fiddle playing, as it exists in Scotland today, was almost entirely an eighteenth-century creation; and it was developed by educated musicians, most of whom were at home in the classical music culture. (1972:111)

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<sup>4</sup> See Gore (1994) for listings of tune titles from eighteenth and nineteenth century printed instrumental music collections.

He continues by noting that the categories of folk fiddler and classical violinist became intermixed and in the process folk music absorbed many elements of classical style.

It is clear, however, that despite this apparent influence of classical music on fiddle playing, untutored players continued to proliferate. Indeed, there are some rather humorous accounts relating to this category of fiddlers. Thomas Macqueen, a nineteenth century song collector, for example, wrote in *The Huron Signal* 11 February 1848, p. 3 col. 1:

In looking back upon the days of our boyhood we remember an old man familiarly known by the name of "Blind Harry" -- who for many years sat daily (Sundays excepted) upon the "New Brig" of Ayr torturing cat-gut to the old quaint Scotch tune "Keep the Whigs in Order." And when the mischievous school-boys would insist upon the propriety of changing the tune the poor good-natured fiddler would smile and reply, "*Weel I was ay thinkin o' learnin anither, whan I was young, but time gaed by and I'm now ow're auld to learn onything new.*" (cited in Lyle, 1996:xx)<sup>5</sup>

This quote is also interesting as it shows how the tune, rather than the instrument and its tone qualities or playing techniques, is the subject of the discussion.

### *Dancing-Masters*

The teaching of dance by dancing-masters and itinerant teachers from the mid-eighteenth century onwards also had implications for fiddle learning. Flett and Flett state that:

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Burns also gives an amusing account of an uneducated fiddler in the following passage:

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle  
Wha used at trysts and fairs to driddle. . . .  
He crooned his gamut, ane, twa, three,  
Then in an *arioso* key,  
The wee Apollo  
Set aff wi' *allegretto* glee  
His giga solo.  
Cited in Johnson (1972:112).

The heyday of step-dancing in Scotland was from about 1750 until 1850. Resident dancing-masters were to be found in every sizeable town, while the smaller towns and villages were visited by itinerant teachers who taught there for a few weeks and then moved on. (1996:1)

These dancing-masters, who taught both dance and social etiquette, frequently also played the fiddle, as did the itinerant dancing-teachers. Indeed it was not uncommon for such individuals to play the fiddle at the same time as teaching the dances, something which must have required considerable skill. Flett and Flett give a rather colourful account of one such teacher:

Adam (Dancie) Myron, whose father and brother were also dancing-teachers, was a typical peripatetic dancing teacher. He walked from place to place 'wearing a big Highland cloak, his fiddle tucked under his tippet in a poke' and held his classes in farm barns for which he charged 4/6 for a thirteen week session. Like many other dancing-teachers he was a fine fiddler and usually played for his classes . . . He died around 1915. (1996:11)

Several of these dancing-teachers also taught the fiddle. These include Dancie Reid (d. 1942)<sup>6</sup>, Andrew Doag (d. circa 1900-10) who taught in the Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly districts (Flett and Flett, 1964), and J. Scott Skinner from Aberdeenshire, who is recorded as having several pupils, one of whom was Sir Charles Ross of Balnagowan Castle (Skinner, 1994:24). James Oswald (b. 1710), the celebrated publisher, collector and composer, was also known as a dancing-master in Dunfermline in 1734 (Purser, 1992:178) and is understood to have played and taught the violin and the 'cello (Purser, 1997:326).

Further, there are reports of those who taught the fiddle influencing other players. Flett and Flett (1964:16) assert that James Neill, for instance, a dancing-teacher in the

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<sup>6</sup> See Cooke (c. 1993:2) for further information on Dancie Reid, and also the film in the School of Scottish Studies Archive which shows him leading a class at the summer school of the Scottish Country Dance Society at St. Andrews c. 1935. At the time of writing, no archive reference number was available for this film.

Forfar area who died in 1920 at the age of 86, “was . . . a very fine violinist, and was noted as a player of reels and strathspeys. Through his pupils -- and their pupils in turn -- he exerted a strong influence on the style of fiddle-playing in his district.”

### *Tutor books*

One aid to learning the fiddle for certain individuals from the eighteenth century onwards might have been a tutor book, as several of these have been produced specifically for the fiddle. In some cases it is the advice that such texts contain that makes them tutor books rather than the fact that they are actually called “tutors” (see, for example, the discussion of the text by Henderson (1935) below). The manuscript violin tutor known as the *Gillespie Manuscript* by James Gillespie of Perth, dated 1768, is the earliest of its kind produced in Scotland<sup>7</sup> (Emmerson, 1971). Farmer (1930-31) has discussed this manuscript in some detail. The title page, which is reproduced in Farmer’s article (p. 399), states that it is “A Collection Of the Best and Most Favourite Tunes For The Violin In Four Parts” and that the work is “Also an Introduction and Directions for Playing the Violin.” Part I of the work is devoted to “Airs and March’s”, Part II to “Scots Tunes”, Part III to “Minuets” and Part IV to “Hornpipes, Jiggs, and Reels”. The introductory part was derived from an English source, and this is perhaps characteristic of the plagiarism of the new music publishing industry in general. Farmer observes:

The Introduction, or “Directions for Playing the Violin”, is not original. It is based on a work entitled *The Arts of Playing the Violin*, which appeared among a series of tutors issued in London in 1731 under the general title of *The Music-Master*; whose author was a certain Peter Prelleur, a Frenchman by birth. It was reissued in various forms, one under the title of *The Complete Tutor for the Violin* (1750), whilst another was printed by Thomson & Son about 1765. (1930-1:400)

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<sup>7</sup> This manuscript is now housed in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS.808).



The rest of the Gillespie tutor, however, is original. It gives twelve lessons or exercises for the beginning fiddler and of these, five are Scots tunes. Farmer also notes that the tutor reveals one of the tricks of the old fiddlers which enabled them to overcome certain difficulties in fingering and bowing. This was accomplished by the adoption of a “scordatura” as it was called, a variation from the ordinary tuning of the violin, and several examples of this are given in the tutor (1930-1:405).

Other tutor books for the fiddle include Honeyman (1898), Skinner (c.1900) and Henderson (1935). Alburger (1996) discusses *The Strathspey, Reel and Hornpipe Tutor* by Honeyman (1898) at some length. She notes that this was based on material in his book, *The Violin: how to Master it*, published some twenty years earlier. Alburger observes that the former work had three purposes: “to provide the first printed tutor: ‘to preserve the style’; and to compile a standard collection for players of all grades and for Strathspey and Reel societies, with music clearly marked so they could all perform with the same bowing, . . . ” (1996:200) . This tutor clearly had some influence on contemporary fiddlers of the period, as it is known that players such as James F. Dickie used it as a guide at the turn of the century (ibid.).

Skinner’s, *A Guide to Bowing Strathspeys, Reels, Pastoral Melodies, Hornpipes, etc.*, includes advice on specific bowing techniques such as the straight stroke, unisons, “the Loop”, the “long bow” and “the Doodle”, as well as on playing particular genres of tunes, the choice of violins, the choice of melodies, “trick fiddling”, stringing, style, and ‘cello accompaniment. He also gives advice on the choice of bow, noting, for instance: “The fishing-rod bow is of no avail for a veteran. Too too [sic] eel and sliddery or smack. A strong and fairly light bow seems best for Scotch music. One you can’t staccato with; a stick which bends like a cane.” (c.1900:20)



The text by Henderson (1935), *Flowers of Scottish Melody*, might be considered by some to be primarily a publication of tunes, but is also considered to be a form of tutor by the present author since its title page states that it comes “with full instructions”. The foreword to this publication thus contains advice on “grace notes or embellishments” and styles of bowing strathspeys. In particular, different ways of bowing the same passage are demonstrated including cross-cut sawing, cross-bowing, swinging bow, snap-bowing, back-bowing, up-driven bow and down-driven bow (1935:v).

Tutor books continue to be published for the fiddle right up to the present day. A recent example is the *The Caledonian Companion* by Hardie (1992). The purposes of this work are threefold: it is intended as a collection of Scottish traditional fiddle music, to provide a “pocket history” to each tune, and “it is a fiddle tutor, i.e., it sets out to elucidate a range of techniques which are essential for the idiomatic rendition of traditional music.” (1992:25) This work introduces ornamentations, bowing, and fingerings progressively, and includes a system of fingering-charts to demonstrate the common major and minor keys. As well as sections on the main forms of Scottish tunes (e.g. jigs and strathspeys), parts of the text are devoted to the flat keys, “birlin’ reels” (reels which include *birlin’-notes*, a form of rhythmic embellishment), third position and position-changing, the minor mode, the higher positions, multiple stopping, drones and other bagpipe influences, scordatura and staccato bowings and other “Italian Tricks”. Further, a cassette tape is also available to go along with this book, allowing students to learn tunes aurally. Another recent example of a tutor is the publication by Anderson and Swing (1979) which is intended to assist fiddlers who wish to play in the Shetland style.

Despite the existence of all these various tutors books, however, less is known about the precise influence that they have actually had on fiddle learning past and present. For Robbie Bairnson, a fiddler from Shetland, it appears that having a tutor book was not particularly helpful in the early stages of the learning process. He bought a "Honeyman's tutor" but apparently "could make nothing of it" until the local minister began teaching violin (Cooke, 1986:22). Donald MacDonnell, a fiddler born in 1888 near Mallaig in the West Highlands, on the other hand, seemed to have had more positive experiences. Cooke (c. 1993:3) notes: "As is often the case with many traditional fiddlers he received no formal tuition, though he did at one time buy a 'tutor' and with this he taught himself to read music."

### *Summary*

Summarising the material presented thus far, then, it is fair to say that whilst we know about the contexts in which individuals learned to play the fiddle prior to the twentieth century -- i.e. learning in a family environment, attending lessons given by a teacher, being self-taught and through a combination of these means -- we know far less about the precise detail of how individuals learned. Information such as which pieces fiddlers began with, how they practised and what they practised, how they acquired their first fiddles and, if they had fiddle lessons, what was actually taught in these, is simply not available.

Further, it is difficult to assess just how many fiddlers would actually have been self-taught, how many would have received lessons and how many would have learned in a family environment, as well as to know to what extent these categories might have overlapped. It is probable, however, that those living in cities or towns would have been more likely to receive fiddle lessons from a teacher than those living in the countryside. One thing that we can say with relative certainty, though, is that fiddle learning would have taken place individually rather than in a group context.

## Aural sources

A good deal more information exists about fiddle learning during the first half of the twentieth century. This is mainly due to the biographical sketches of individual fiddlers that can be found in various studies which are based on fiddlers' own aural accounts. On the whole though, little has been documented and published, and it is probable that a good deal of archival information on fiddle learning in the form of recordings exists but as yet remains untapped. Before examining these sketches, however, it will be useful to consider two accounts of learning that the researcher obtained from fieldwork she conducted in the North East of Scotland. These accounts are especially helpful since they highlight the kind of domestic and social circumstances which impinged on learning the instrument during the first half of the twentieth century. At the time of interviewing, both these fiddlers were still playing the instrument on a fairly regular basis.

Gordon Easton was born in 1923 in Tyrie near Strichen, Fraserburgh. He is well-known locally as a fiddler and is renowned as a singer of Bothy Ballads, and was brought up in a musical environment<sup>8</sup>:

My mither played the fiddle -- she was real good, but she didna ging oot an play, jist at hame, but she got lessons and she played the fiddle. An there was a grocer man doon at the Cauldhame shop, at eh, Tyrie, he took in pupils. He wasnae the best o a fiddler but he gaed folk a start on the road tae the fiddle. He took in pupils and . . . my mither gaed to him for lessons.

The above quote is particularly interesting because it mentions fiddle playing by a woman. This is something that was relatively uncommon in Scotland until recently<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The following extracts have been taken from an interview with Gordon Easton held on 11 October 1995 (SA1995.141).

<sup>9</sup> Cooke (1986:122), in his discussion of the fiddle tradition of the Shetland Isles, gives two possible explanations for the lack of female fiddlers there: 1) women were traditionally too busy with domestic tasks to be able to find the time to become good fiddlers, and 2) fiddle-playing was considered the prerogative of the male.

During winter time, it was usual for the grocer, George Foley, to entertain at the family home. Gordon described these occasions:

My Grandda an a the locals at wis interested in music were invited in aboot. They'd an auld hoose doon the close there, a big peat fire and abody sitting roon about it -- jist a ceilidh. An is George Foley, the grocer, he played the hale evening . . . . It wis gut strings at that time on the fiddle, ye see. An he wid let doon his fiddle, just for a wee breather and a smoke maybe, an tuned er up again, an he played a the tunes.

These visits gave Gordon the idea that he would like to play the fiddle:

Well, that gaed me an affa inspiration, ye ken. I wis supposed to be beddit, in my bed, [but] I mind I used tae creep ben and listen to the music [laughs]. Aye, this wis later on in the evening. An he played right up to midnight, this wis . . . Saturday night, . . . an efter that it wis sacred music. . . . So that . . . really gaed me the idea that I wanted a fiddle tae play. Aye, an my mither did play as I say.

Gordon obtained his first fiddle at around the age of eight. Although he received a few lessons from George Foley, these were discontinued as Gordon maintained that he already knew a number of tunes and did not require any more tuition. After he left school, he regularly attended his local Strathspey and Reel Society, and this also appeared to have a positive effect on his playing:

. . . that brought me on, . . . ye ken, . . . cause o the better fiddlers that ye wis playing alang wi. An throughoot the winter we hid a meetin every week, an there wis aye a good fiddler maybe once a month invited tae come doon and jist tae gie a demonstration and encourage the locals. . . . An well, if the music's in ye, ye ken, if ye've got a good ear, ye pick it up an enjoy it . . .

Gordon also performed in a band for dances with his cousin who played the piano accordion.

Bert Murray, a fiddler and a prolific composer of fiddle tunes, had an equally interesting introduction to the instrument. He was born in 1913 and grew up in the city of Aberdeen where he still lives<sup>10</sup>:

. . . my earliest recollection [of the fiddle] was when I was about eight and a half [or] nine years of age, when I used to sit and watch my brother who was at what I call the school fiddle. The education people loaned you a fiddle and you paid . . . , if I remember correctly, it was two and six pence or half a crown in those days, per quarter. And, eh, I know my brother just hated playing that fiddle. And I just was thrilled to bits just watching every move he made in spite of the horrible noise he was producing. And, eh, he was ordered to do an hour every day practice, and sometimes he used to cheat a bit. It didn't bother me because as soon as he went out to play with his friends or football or whatever, I used to open the case and take out the fiddle, and by this time I'd learned how to hold it and produce the sort of sounds, and I kept on at this every day. Quite soon I was playing quite simple melodies like "There is a Happy Land" and things like that. And, eh, I was doing my little bit as usual one afternoon when, eh, unknown to me my Dad had arrived home for his supper because he was going to do some overtime. . . . I carried on, and then realising that it must be nearly time for Dad coming home, put the fiddle away, put it back in its place, came through from the one room into the other and saw my Dad and I was thunderstruck. And he said, "now laddie, I'm not annoyed because that is a nice sound you're producing, and I came in and I thought it was Gordon [his brother] that was playing and said to yer mother, 'Gordon is suddenly playing great'. And of course mother said, 'It's not Gordon, it's Bert!'"

The outcome of this was that an inexpensive fiddle was purchased for Bert and he was sent to a private teacher for fiddle lessons for a period:

And, eh, we found a teacher about two streets away from where we lived. He was an engineer, played in dance bands and also taught children to play the fiddle. Shilling a lesson, again that was a fortune.

After nine months of teaching, Bert's father was taken into hospital and the family could no longer afford the fiddle tuition. However, Bert continued to learn the fiddle acting on his own initiative:

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<sup>10</sup> Extracts taken from an interview which took place on 18 October 1995 (SA1995.152).

. . . I carried on from then on my own, thrilled to bits to be playing. I played every opportunity I could get. So in a way, I suppose you could say that I was more or less self-taught apart from the elementary bits.

Like Gordon Easton, Bert became involved in a local Strathspey and Reel Society and attended the group on a regular basis. Although both these fiddlers received an element of fiddle tuition, then, they were essentially self-taught players. Illustrations of each of these fiddlers may be found overleaf.

The research by Cooke (1986) on the fiddle tradition in the Shetland Isles contains a good deal of information on how the fiddle was learned there between approximately 1900 and 1950. One of his informants, Andrew Poleson (d.1979) from Whalsay, for example, began the instrument at around the age of twelve and had the strings of the fiddle tuned doh, me, soh, doh to begin with, until his ear told him that he was wrong. He started learning on a borrowed fiddle, learned tunes from his mother who sang and absorbed style and technique informally from a number of active fiddlers (1986:31). Willie Barclay Henderson (b. 1900), on the other hand, started to play on the fiddle at around the age of five but had no instrument to begin with. He remembered having to make his own fiddle "oot of a Fry's chocolate box" and recollected that "I didn't learn to play on that at all but it learned me a bow haund, you see." (1986:44)

Cooke's various accounts of fiddle learning in Shetland during the first part of the twentieth century show that learning for the most part took place within the context of the family and the local community. Few of the fiddlers he interviewed received specific lessons on the instrument. Rather, it was common for youngsters to become interested in playing because their parents played the fiddle or because there were instruments present in the home. Furthermore, fiddlers usually "picked up" the techniques of playing the instrument by a process of trial and error rather than by being explicitly taught them. The use of exercises such as scales and arpeggios to improve one's playing was also rare, and most tunes were learned aurally.





**1 Gordon Easton and his wife, Isobel** (at their home, 11 October, 1995)



**2 Bert Murray** (at his home, 18 October, 1995)

The picture given by Macdonald (1976) of fiddle learning in the Upper Spey Valley, North East Scotland, however, is rather different. From the research he carried out amongst older players who had grown up in that area in the first half of the twentieth century, Macdonald identified two main categories of players, the “schooled” and the “unschooled” fiddler. As well as exhibiting different styles of playing, he found that these two types of fiddler differed in terms of their attitudes towards the instrument. Whereas the schooled players were often musically literate and were more likely to play for a “listening” audience, the unschooled fiddlers could not usually read music and were more likely to play for dancing than for listening.

Macdonald found that the musical influences on the unschooled fiddler included the family environment, notable musicians in the area who were accepted as the best fiddlers for dances and weddings, travelling musicians such as tinker pipers and fiddlers who were relatively common before the Second World War, and the concert fiddler, the most influential of whom for older players was James Scott Skinner (1976:25).

Miller (1986) also considers fiddle learning in her study on music-making in the Glenkens area of Galloway, South West Scotland. Part of her work examines the musical life of the community during the first half of the twentieth century, and in it she describes how some of the fiddlers growing up in that period learned to play the instrument. In particular, she focuses on two informants Robbie Murray (b. 1907) and Davy Jardine (b. 1938) and considers how they learned to play the fiddle. Her study shows that it was quite common for fiddlers in that region of Scotland to have lessons, but equally there were a number of players who did not. The reasons for this variation appear complex. She concludes:

My understanding is incomplete as to why some fiddlers took lessons and others didn't, apart from their personal circumstances such as proximity



to a known tutor or being taught by a relative. The former is probably the reason why more village than country fiddlers received tuition. (1986:58)

Interestingly, too, she gives the example of one fiddler, "Wee Will Kirk", who gave fiddle lessons but apparently did not accept payment from his own pupils, teaching instead for his own enjoyment (1986:54).

Other sources which contain instances of how individual fiddlers growing up in the first part of the twentieth century learned to play include the studies of Tom Anderson, Shetland (Macdonald, 1991), Tom Hughes from the Borders (Shepherd, 1982), and those by Cooke (c. 1993) concerning, for example, Donald MacDonnell from the West Highlands, Hector MacAndrew from Aberdeenshire, and Albert Stewart. These accounts, although diverse, show how the family unit and local community were important influences on all these fiddlers.

The influence of gramophone recordings (Alburger, 1996) and later on, radio, has also been considerable for many fiddle players growing up in the early years of the twentieth century. Macdonald, for instance, writes about Tom Anderson that:

From an early age Tom became interested in music, and at the age of 8 years began to learn some "tunes" on the fiddle from his paternal Grandfather, who lived in the same village. From this time onward he was influenced musically by the phonograph recordings of J. S. Skinner and from hearing the playing of many other Scottish, Irish and, of course, Shetland fiddlers. (1991:8)

Further, Duesenberry (1996)<sup>11</sup> who has conducted considerable research into the involvement of various forms of mass media (particularly radio) in the Scottish fiddle tradition, casts light on what fiddlers actually sought in the recordings they listened to. She found that the "knowledgeable listener" who plays the fiddle did listen to

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<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Peggy Duesenberry for a copy of her unpublished paper on "Reception Theory and the Scottish Fiddle Tradition: Notes from a Study of Mass-Mediated Performance".

broadcasts in the hope of learning new tunes, and that these individuals were especially interested in repertoire, ensemble arrangements, and with the formation of medleys.

### *Summary*

The accounts presented in this section show that learning for many fiddlers in Scotland during the first quarter of the twentieth century was again pursued by the following means: 1) being self-taught, 2) learning in a family and community context, 3) receiving lessons from a teacher, and 4) by a combination of some or all of these three methods. By and large, learning for both the “schooled” and the “unschooled” players was undertaken individually rather than collectively. In addition, most fiddlers began learning the instrument during childhood. Recorded sources also influenced certain players.

At this juncture, it is necessary to state that there was a gradual decline in the popularity of the fiddle after Scott Skinner’s death in 1927 (Johnson, 1997:246). Cooke (1986:120) notes that in Shetland, for instance, the accordion ousted the fiddler from his primary role in the dance situation, and the availability of radio, television and records and cassettes made the fiddler less necessary in the domestic context.

However, the folk music revival in Scotland, which began around the 1950s (Munro, 1996) helped to reverse this trend. The revival represented a reawakening of interest in the traditional music and song of Scotland after the second world war and its origins have been traced to the USA (ibid.). This was a very important period in terms of traditional music in Scotland which led to, for instance, the creation of the first folk clubs (MacKinnon, 1993) and the discovery of musicians within the travelling community such as Jeannie Robertson (Porter and Gower, 1995).

Although the revival was primarily concerned with song at first, subsequently, around the late 1960s, solo and group instrumental playing began to be heard more frequently in folk clubs and at festivals. Ewan McVicar, a well-known musician who was involved in the Scottish folk music revival, gave his own recollections on the emergence of the fiddle:

Although we heard the fiddle played in Scottish Country dance bands on the radio and at dances, there were very seldom fiddle players at folk clubs or concerts. The only three I know of were Bobby Campbell, Dave Swarbrick, and Robin Williamson. Bobby played in a trio with Archie and Ray Fisher in Glasgow around 1958/9, then went to London where he studied with Ewan MacColl, and there played in a trio called the Exiles with Gordon MacCulloch and Enoch Kent. Dave Swarbrick played with the Iain Campbell Folk Group in Birmingham from about 1958 until he and Martin Carthy formed a duo in the late 1960s or later. Robin Williamson of the Incredible String Band began to play scratchy "old-timey" American style fiddle in about 1964, and still does.

That was it until late 1967 when Archie Fisher persuaded Aly Bain to come south from Shetland. I shared Aly's first folk gig with him, in a Fife folk club in about November 1967. Soon he formed a duo with Mike Whellans, and around 1968 a few fiddlers began to appear, in such groups as the Clutha and the Whistlebinkies<sup>12</sup>.

Munro provides a broad picture of the development of instrumental music in the revival and makes a specific reference to learning:

Toward the end of the 1960s the increasing popularity of instrumental music was already evident, and groups such as the Corries, and the Chieftains from Ireland, were using a wide variety of folk instruments: stringed, wind and percussion. Many young people began learning to play the pipes and traditional fiddle. . . . By 1970 native traditional music was increasingly being heard at folk events throughout Scotland. (1996:46)

The revival marks the next significant period in the history of the fiddle in Scotland.

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Ewan McVicar, 30 July 1998.

## Revival

Two new settings in which the fiddle can be learned have come to prominence since the revival of the instrument which began around the late 1960s. The first relates to fiddle tuition in certain primary and secondary schools. The second relates to tuition in workshops, evening classes and summer schools.

### *Primary and secondary school tuition*

The tuition of Scots fiddle in schools on mainland Scotland is undertaken by peripatetic instructors who give lessons to individuals or small groups. This practice, however, varies considerably from region to region and school to school. The reason for this is that education authorities normally employ “violin teachers” or “string instructors” whose role is primarily to teach classical violin<sup>13</sup>. However, several of these teachers also teach fiddle, often because they have a background in Scots fiddle music<sup>14</sup>. This is the certainly the case with two teachers in Morayshire in North East Scotland (whom the researcher knows personally), for instance, who are both well-known fiddlers in their own right.<sup>15</sup>

In the Shetland Isles, however, the picture is rather different. Youngsters can receive what are termed “traditional fiddle lessons” in school by individuals who are paid to teach *fiddle* rather than classical violin. This fiddle teaching programme in schools began largely as a result of the efforts of the late Tom Anderson (Swing 1991). At the time of writing (to the author’s knowledge), Shetland is the only area of Scotland where the fiddle is being taught as an instrument in its own right in schools by

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<sup>13</sup> Dave Francis, Traditional Music Co-ordinator with the Scottish Arts Council, has conducted a survey of the provision of fiddle tuition in schools in Scotland. The results of this work are due to be made publicly available in the Autumn, 1998 (interview, 17 February 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dave Francis, 17 February 1998.

<sup>15</sup> James Alexander teaches violin and Scots fiddle at Milne’s High School in the village of Fochabers, Morayshire as well as in certain schools in the surrounding area and, as a result, has formed an after-school fiddle group known as the “Fochabers Fiddlers”. Donald Barr has taught fiddle at Speyside High School, Aberlour and at schools in Keith, Morayshire, and has founded a similar group called the “Speyside Fiddlers”.

peripatetic instructors. Further, such fiddle tuition has proved very popular, and a number of individuals in Shetland hope that this provision for fiddle might be extended eventually to include other "traditional" instruments such as the accordion and the guitar (Campbell, 1997b)<sup>16</sup>.

Interestingly, too, the practice of teaching the fiddle in schools occurs in other countries. On a visit to Norway in 1997, for example, the present researcher observed children receiving after-school lessons on the Hardanger fiddle in the Telemark region of Norway<sup>17</sup>.

### *Summer schools, workshops and evening classes*

The second context in which the fiddle can be learned includes summer schools, evening classes, workshops and residential courses. Many classes are now in existence, and well-established groups include the University of Stirling Summer School which began in 1977 (University of Stirling, 1996), the Adult Learning Project Scots Music Group, Edinburgh which began in 1990 (Lockhart, 1998), and the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop<sup>18</sup>. Further, the number of classes appears to be ever-increasing, judging by the many advertising leaflets from various organisations that are available and also by the number growing number of groups receiving funding from the Scottish Arts Council (see below). It is not only the fiddle that is taught in all these contexts, however; other "traditional" instruments such as the tin whistle, guitar, chanter, accordion and voice are also offered by certain organisations. Furthermore, formal classes offering tuition in traditional music are found in other

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<sup>16</sup> This finding came about as a result of a research study commissioned by Shetland Arts Trust, conducted by the present researcher, which surveyed all forms of music in Shetland.

<sup>17</sup> This research was funded by an award from the Anglo-Norse Society. The teaching of the Hardanger fiddle in addition to other orchestral instruments in what are termed "music schools", is presently available in approximately half of the regions in Norway (see Campbell, 1997a).

<sup>18</sup> Names and details of other organisations offering traditional music tuition may be found in Munro (1996) and in the Scottish Music Handbook 1996.

countries. Researchers have documented similar developments in fiddle traditions in, for example, the United States (Dabczynski, 1994), Canada (Garrison, 1985), and Ireland (Veblen, 1991).

One characteristic of virtually all these formal contexts in Scotland is that learning takes place in *groups*. Another is that tuition is mainly offered to *adult* learners. However, it is interesting to note that the phenomenon of adults learning to play fiddle music in a group situation is not new. Strathspey and Reel Societies, which are to be found in towns and cities throughout Scotland, are attended largely by adult fiddle players<sup>19</sup> on a weekly basis, although some also have “junior sections” for younger members (see further, Lockhart, 1998, for information on various societies). Certain of these have been in existence for a considerable period of time -- the Edinburgh Strathspey and Reel Society, established in 1881 (Blaustein, 1993:267), was the first (Alburger, 1996:196), and the Glasgow Strathspey and Reel Society also began over a century ago.

Although the primary function of these societies is not to teach adults *how* to play the fiddle, it seems likely that individuals will learn new repertoire as a result of participating in these groups. In addition, whilst these organisations do not have someone who specifically performs the role of a teacher, they invariably have a conductor who *acts* as a teacher might do by, for example, introducing new repertoire (normally through handing out sheet music) and giving guidance on tempo.

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<sup>19</sup> Strathspey and Reel Societies are normally made up of a substantial number of fiddlers, often twenty or more, who are usually accompanied by double bass and piano.

### *Reasons for the growth of classes*

There are several reasons why formal fiddle tuition has come into existence in recent years. Stan Reeves, a co-ordinator at the Adult Learning Project, Edinburgh, highlighted one reason:

If you're not in a family that plays traditional music, it's very, very unlikely that you're going to learn it, because there isn't this social setting where you can pick it up informally . . . You really have to . . . teach yourself -- be self-taught . . . That was really the only option if you weren't being taught by a family or some of the very, very few individual teachers there are<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, social changes in Scotland, such as the increasing use of the mass media for entertainment and the fact that, in order to seek employment, individuals are less likely to remain in the communities in which they grew up, mean that it is now less common for the fiddle to be learned in a family or community situation (Cooke, 1986; Alburger, 1996; Johnson, 1997). This situation has led to the need for formal contexts where the fiddle is taught (Dabczynski, 1994).

The recent increase in sponsorship and funding for traditional music can also account for the development of classes. Over a decade ago, the Scottish Arts Council noted in *The Report of the Traditional and Folk Arts of Scotland Working Party* that:

The survival of the traditional arts depends inevitably on opportunities to learn, to practice and appreciate. . . . For the individual learning to play traditional music in Scotland today, much is left to chance, including geographic good fortune. (1984:5)

Thus, the need for widely available educational opportunities was seen as important and has led to a growth in public funding: a survey of Scottish Arts Council Annual Reports over a ten-year period reveals that the amount of funding given to education-

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Stan Reeves, 23 May 1995.



related courses has increased quite dramatically. For instance, the 1983/84 report showed that around £3380 was given to promote traditional music with little of this being given to education. By 1995/96, however, the total expenditure for "Traditional/Gaelic" music was in the region of £87,500, and the bulk of this expenditure was related to education<sup>21</sup>. The report for 1996/97 reveals a similar pattern. The Scottish Arts Council is not the only body to fund traditional music tuition, however. Local authorities also help to finance the provision of classes in some parts of Scotland<sup>22</sup>.

The heightened profile of traditional music following the folk music revival of the 1950s has been another factor. Programmes such as "Travelling Folk" and "Take the Floor", produced by BBC Radio Scotland, are devoted mainly to traditional music, and are popular and widely listened to. Moreover, sessions which take place in pubs and bars (MacKinnon, 1993), the commercial sale of traditional music recordings, and live performances of traditional music have all become commonplace. These various elements have all helped to make traditional music accessible to large numbers of people, and have also created an atmosphere in which individuals want to learn to play it.

Lastly, the rise and popularity of classes may be linked to the current political climate in Scotland. Given the present United Kingdom Government's commitment to the creation of a Scottish Parliament, and the belief among many for a long time that

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<sup>21</sup> Some of the groups and organisations which received finance during the 1995/96 period from the Scottish Arts Council for traditional music education include the Adult Learning Project, Balnain House Trust, Comunn na Clarsaich, Cumbernauld Theatre Trust, Dunbar Traditional Music Festival, Feis Rois, Friends of Heartland FM, Highland Regional Council, Lorn Junior Fiddlers, North East Scotland Heritage Trust, Orkney Strathspey and Reel Society, Peebles Arts Festival Committee, The Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland, and the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop (Scottish Arts Council Report, 1995/96, pp. 49-50).

<sup>22</sup> Two days of workshops in traditional fiddle, Scots song and guitar, sponsored by Moray District Council, for instance, were held in Elgin Town Hall in April 1998.



Scotland has claims to becoming an independent country, it is possible that learning traditional music may serve, or come to serve, for some, as a means of reaffirming national identity. The fact that music can play such a role has been noted by a number of writers (for example, Baily, 1994), and the recent debate about which piece of music should be adopted as the Scottish National Anthem<sup>23</sup> indicates that music is likely to play a similar function in the construction of a new Scottish identity.

However, it is not wholly unexpected that, in this late twentieth century context, formal lessons should provide a pattern of entry to the Scots fiddle tradition for many people. This is an era in which one can obtain tuition via evening classes and short courses in many diverse activities. In particular, study programmes concerned with Scottish culture may be found throughout the country. It has also become increasingly important in Western society to attend courses that lead to a particular qualification (although, generally speaking, few qualifications can be obtained from attending fiddle classes).

#### *Characteristics of formal classes*

Classes offering fiddle tuition on a weekly basis are usually situated in the *urban* areas of Scotland. Examples of these are the Adult Learning Project (Edinburgh), the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop, and Balnain House in Inverness. Summer courses, weekend workshops and those courses which involve a residential stay for participants, however, are quite often situated in rural districts. A summary chart

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<sup>23</sup> Following a readers' poll in the Glasgow Herald concerning which song should be adopted as the Scottish National Anthem, the paper embarked on commissioning a new song through a competition open to all. One commentator said that the song would be expected "to reflect Scotland's present day attributes and aspirations" and that it should be "relevant to a forward-looking country with a rich heritage" (Ritchie, 1998:5).

which details some of the organisations which offered fiddle tuition to adults in the 1995/6 period can be found in Appendix 1.

There appear to be several reasons why weekly classes are situated predominately in urban locations: 1) the density of population in urban areas assures classes of numbers and thus makes them economically viable, 2) there is easy access to the classes as a result of both private and public transport, and 3) it is also civically desirable to have such groups in the city as a contribution to meeting the need for recreation and leisure activities. A further justification of why these types of classes are proving especially popular in urban areas may be found in Hopkins' (1986:268) description of the Hardanger fiddle tradition in Norway. She suggests that individuals have been drawn to the Hardanger fiddle because "they are searching for a simpler, more wholesome existence than the chaotic industrialised ways of life they find around them." Learners who live in cities in Scotland, then, may feel inclined to learn the fiddle because they associate the instrument with an idealised pastoral lifestyle.

### *Changes*

Several changes have come about as a result of the formal tuition of the fiddle in schools and other classes. Swing (1991) notes in her study of fiddle teaching in Shetland, for instance, how the fiddle, once learned informally within the fabric of the community, is now formally taught in schools. She cites a number of differences resulting from this change including weekly lessons instead of sporadic coaching, teaching being done by a non-relative rather than a family member or friend, the pupil only having one regular teacher instead of many models, and the teacher being paid for the teaching (1991:153). Another change is that many more women are now learning the instrument, traditionally a male dominated pursuit (Cooke, 1986).

The formal tuition of the instrument has also been viewed as a factor which has contributed to the decline in regional styles of fiddle playing. Whereas historically, fiddlers would generally have learned to play in the style of their locality as a result of interacting with local musicians, students who attend fiddle classes are now more likely to learn to play in the style of their teacher. However, it is interesting to note that there are certain teachers who actively promote particular styles of playing. Angus Grant senior from Fort William on the west coast of Scotland, and his son, Angus Grant junior, for example, both teach “West Highland Style” fiddle playing<sup>24</sup>. Further, one can attend classes specifically to learn a certain style of playing such as “Shetland Style”. This is a trend which is likely to continue as, with the growing numbers of classes, being able to learn in a certain style is also a way of establishing the individuality of each group.

Moreover, whereas fiddlers learning to play the instrument in the early twentieth century would have been dependent largely on local influences, today’s fiddlers may be influenced by all kinds of sources. For instance, fiddle players in Scotland have ready access through cassette tapes, records, compact discs and radio to the playing styles and repertoires of musicians in other countries, such as Ireland, America and Canada. The influence of the mass media has also contributed to the disappearance of regional playing styles, particularly as recordings can be played repeatedly, allowing fiddlers to copy, consciously or unconsciously, the nuances of a performance (Alburger, 1996:199).

The fact that many of the evening classes and workshops set up to provide tuition on the fiddle are primarily catering for, and attracting, *adults* also represents quite a

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<sup>24</sup> Angus Grant senior has a saying that “West is best”, which he often uses at workshops and at lessons with his pupils, referring to his perception of the importance of this style of fiddle playing (interview, 14 December 1995).

dramatic change from past practices. Previously the fiddle would normally have been learned by children, as the first two sections of this chapter demonstrated. The important motivational aspect to this change is that whereas it is quite probable that children will have had this decision made for them by their parents or guardians, adult learners will almost certainly have made up their own minds to learn the instrument.

There are several reasons why adults, in particular, may be attracted to learn the fiddle. Firstly, contemporary fiddlers such as Aly Bain and Alasdair Fraser have achieved something of a “cult status” in Scotland and indeed in other countries. Such fiddlers frequently feature on mass media and in live concert settings, and sell many commercial recordings<sup>25</sup>. Further, they tend to play tunes in a virtuosic manner and are often humorous on stage. Their playing and personalities have undoubtedly helped to popularise the instrument as well as items of repertoire.

Secondly, the current vogue of ceilidh dancing, especially in cities in Scotland, might also contribute to the popularity of the fiddle. Ceilidh bands frequently contain one or more fiddlers and such groups have surely helped to make the instrument prevalent. Thirdly, the genre commonly known as “Cape Breton step-dancing”, which has also recently become popular in Scotland (Flett and Flett, 1996), is normally performed to the music of the fiddle. Interestingly, too, this type of dancing may be learned by adults in certain classes<sup>26</sup>. These three elements have all led to the fiddle assuming a contemporary high profile status as an instrument.

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<sup>25</sup> Two examples of compact disc recordings are: Aly Bain, Lonely Bird. Whirlie Records, 1992 (Whirlie CD2); and Alasdair Fraser and Paul Machlis, Skyedance. Culburnie Records, 1986 (CUL101D).

<sup>26</sup> Two groups which offered tuition in Cape Breton step-dancing during 1996 were the Adult Learning Project, Edinburgh and the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that the majority of the above pursuits (i.e. ceilidh dancing, step-dancing, and purchasing recordings) are largely adult pursuits and ones which are not so accessible to young children. Therefore the images that the adult learner may have of both the fiddle as an instrument and of the contexts in which it is performed may differ from those held by children.

MacKinnon (1993:51), in his book *The British Folk Scene*, makes the comment that “The pattern of entry to folk music performance is informal in the sense of occurring largely outwith formalised tuition. Formal lessons in folk music are rare.” This quote may be put back into its context by stating that MacKinnon was not talking specifically about Scotland and was possibly referring to the fairly recent past in Britain. It is also possible that, as his study deals with folk clubs, he was referring more to how singers learn their skills. However, it is my contention that, particularly in urban areas of Scotland, formal lessons are not rare. In addition, to borrow MacKinnon’s phrase, these classes are now also providing a “significant pattern of entry” to the folk scene. Many adults who learn in formal classes, for instance, are playing in sessions and concerts, and, in some cases, have gone on to actually teach the instrument themselves. Indeed, a full survey and discussion of all the classes where traditional music is taught would make a worthy study in its own right.

### **Summary of Chapter One**

This chapter has explored a range of issues which are essential to placing this study in context. It began by examining fiddle learning prior to the twentieth century in Scotland and found that, whilst we have general information about the ways in which the instrument was learned during this period, detailed information does not exist. Although a good deal more is known about fiddle learning in the first half of the twentieth century as a result of aural accounts from fiddlers, I will argue in the next chapter that, due to the difficulties of studying learning retrospectively, truly

comprehensive accounts of how the fiddle was learned historically are simply not available to researchers. As a result, I will suggest that we need to turn our enquiries to contemporary instances of learning if the object is to gain a precise understanding of how learning the fiddle is achieved.

The changes which have taken place in the ways in which the fiddle can be learned in Scotland in the latter part of the twentieth century have also been considered in this chapter. Formal classes where the fiddle is learned in groups now provide a pattern of entry for many to the Scots fiddle tradition, and especially for the adult learner. Yet despite the centrality of such classes in the fiddle tradition, few researchers have looked into them in great detail, as Chapter Two illustrates.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature as an essential context for the present study. It considers, in particular, previous ethnomusicological work relating to music learning and teaching, and relevant research on adult learning. An underlying standpoint in this chapter is the need for research which focuses on Scots fiddle learning in formal settings.

### **Need for studies of teaching and learning**

The examination of the teaching and learning of music has not previously been a major focus of ethnomusicological study. Indeed, Nettl identifies this area as a recent development in the discipline, with three aspects:

One way ethnomusicology has changed since the 1950s involves the vastly increased importance of learning and teaching. Three facets of this process are important. First, and most general, ethnomusicologists have become increasingly interested in the ways in which societies teach their musical systems, that is, in the way music is transmitted. . . . Second is the explicit study of teaching and learning. . . . Third among these concerns for learning and teaching is the issue of field research. . . . A major change in ethnomusicology field methods was effected when fieldworkers began, in the middle 1950s, systematically and routinely to study performance of music. (1992a:388-9)

This last point refers to the approach to the study of music in other cultures by ethnomusicologists in which they behave as active participants instead of passive observers. As a consequence of such participation, some researchers, as well as being competent in one particular musical genre, have achieved mastery of another musical tradition -- what Hood (1960) has termed "bi-musicality". Indeed, one reason why ethnomusicologists have undoubtedly become interested in the way in which other cultures teach and learn their music is simply because they desire to learn such music themselves.



Included in this recent transition towards a closer investigation of the teaching and learning of music has been the use of ethnomusicological research in music education. "Ethnic" or "world" music now commonly appears in the classrooms of the West<sup>1</sup>. The gamelan orchestra from Indonesia, for instance, has proved popular, and one explanation for its acceptance may relate to the ways in which the ensemble is learned. Learning takes place in a group environment and methods of teaching allow for the interaction of Western and indigenous models of instruction (Sorrell, 1990). Furthermore, researchers have argued for the inclusion of models of teaching and learning from other countries and contexts in Western classroom contexts. Blacking (1985), for example, argues that the ways in which the Venda society of South Africa learn to make music reinforce some goals of music education, and Cooke (1978) makes a similar point about music learning in traditional societies. Thus, the findings of ethnomusicological work on teaching and learning can have useful practical applications.

It is perhaps surprising, however, that a more focused interest in how music is taught and learned is recent, given the argument put forward by Smith:

. . . if human beings could not learn music -- or did not for any reason -- we ethnomusicologists would have no field of study. Without learning there would be no music-making . . . . Whether we wish to focus on the process or the product, the capacity to learn music and the act of learning it are critical to ethnomusicology. (1987:214)

It is clear, then, that the study of learning and teaching should be a primary concern for ethnomusicologists. Smith's comment about focusing on the *act* or the process of learning is of particular relevance to the present study, because, as we shall see, this is an area in which little research has been undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> See futher, Vulliamy and Lee (1982); and Floyd (1996). In Scotland, world music is taught at institutions which train music teachers, such as Moray House Institute of Education in Edinburgh. World music is also part of the National Curriculum in England and Wales.



### *Recent research on learning in ethnomusicology*

Although the study of the teaching and learning of music is a relatively new domain for ethnomusicologists, it will be useful here to examine some recent research trends in this area by way of an introductory overview. From a brief survey it becomes apparent that a good deal of previous work has been concerned with societal learning -- considering broadly how societies learn their musical systems (e.g. Blacking, 1973; and Nettl, 1985) -- rather than with instances of individual learning. The nature of musical ability among humans and how it is acquired (Blacking, 1992) is another current concern for ethnomusicologists.

Other disciplines which have taken a particular interest in music learning include psychology, anthropology and music education (Campbell, 1991:78). However, generally speaking, most of the research that has been undertaken to date in all these disciplines has centred on the musical experiences of children and the developmental phases that they go through (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1986; and Umemoto, 1997), rather than on adult learning processes. Further, much of the data gathered by psychologists on learning has come from experimentation conducted in the laboratory rather than in natural contexts (Cole, 1996).

Another feature of a good deal of previous ethnomusicological work relating to learning is that, as Nettl (1992a:381) notes, it has tended to focus on the *product*: the tune or repertoire; rather than the *process* of learning: the act of learning tunes or acquiring repertoire. This is especially true in studies relating to traditional music. One factor which may account for the lack of attention given to the process of learning is that scholars have often been more concerned with investigating the repertoire that an individual possesses or the variants a particular tune may undergo (see, for instance, Cowdery, 1990) than with looking at how music is actually learned

by individuals. The concentration on the product has not only been a major feature of research in ethnomusicology up to around the late 1960s, it has also been a trait of research in other disciplines such as anthropology (Finnegan, 1992). Furthermore, the inclination to veer toward this type of study falls within the tradition of “positivism”, which refers to ways of thinking which are related to the material nature of things. One example of a field of study strongly influenced by positivism is Western historical musicology, which has dwelt primarily on the study of manuscripts and other written sources (Kerman, 1985). However, it must also be noted that despite ethnomusicology’s “opposition” to historical musicology, some of the latter’s positivist tendencies have been inherited even though ethnomusicology’s sources have been primarily oral/aural rather than written.

#### *Need for studies of music learning in Scotland*

In addition to the general need for and relevance of studies of learning, there is also a particular need for studies which consider how traditional music is learned in Scotland. This is not only because there are few studies on this topic, but also because it is clear that, if we are to fully understand the dimensions of how music is learned cross-culturally, we require studies of learning in different cultural contexts. Indeed, this seems particularly important if we are to search for universal patterns of musical development.

It is also appropriate that a study which considers Scots fiddle learning should be located within ethnomusicology. There has long been a relationship between this discipline and studies dealing with traditional music in a European context. Indeed, scholarly enquiries which deal with this type of music are normally found within ethnomusicology rather than other branches of musicology. Hence, studying how traditional music is learned in Scotland stands within existing research frameworks.

Turning attention specifically to the fiddle, apart from Swing's (1991) study of the teaching of the fiddle in schools in the Shetland Isles, there are at present no other major studies which deal with the topic of teaching and learning the instrument in Scotland in a formal setting. Indeed, this researcher could find little scholarly literature concerning the present-day teaching and learning of the fiddle in workshops, evening classes and the like. However, several references have been made to this subject in non-academic journals and texts, for example, Wilson (1995) and Lockhart (1998) who both discuss the Scots Music Group at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh.

Perhaps this lack of information can be attributed to the fact that here is a relatively recent phenomenon -- many of the classes that now exist began during the 1980s or later -- so learning in these new settings has not yet been fully embraced by scholars as a focus of research. Yet this is an important cultural phenomenon which deserves our attention. Large numbers of people, especially adults, are choosing to learn to play traditional music on the fiddle in such groups. Clearly, as researchers, we need to know more about these classes, the people who are attending them, why they exist and what happens within them.

### **Focus of previous work**

It is not only in Scotland that one finds the genre of traditional music being taught on a variety of instruments in formal, group-learning settings. Several doctoral studies of traditional music in other countries have focused on this theme. The picture that emerges from such studies is that, generally speaking, researchers have often chosen to focus on the *teacher*, giving less attention to the *learners*. Indeed, this tendency appears to be in line with the focus in music-education research generally which "has been more on teaching and teachers than on learning and students" (Smith,

1987:203). To illustrate this point further, it is necessary to briefly examine the content of some key studies.

In a study based in Ireland, Veblen (1991) considered the teacher's role in the transmission of traditional music. Her research centred particularly on two master teachers who were teaching traditional music on a variety of instruments. Interviews were also conducted with thirteen other music teachers and twenty-three organisational members as well as three other informants. The purpose of the investigation was to ascertain whether or not the role of the music teacher in the transmission of traditional music in Ireland was changing or remaining stable, the theoretical frameworks for the work being those of change and stability.

One finding from the study was that the role of the teacher had remained constant over time, although with the development of organisations dealing with traditional music over the past fifty years, there had been changes in the setting and context of teaching and learning. For example, students were frequently taught in groups instead of in a one-to-one situation. Whilst Veblen's work contains data on how the teachers themselves learned to play the instrument, as well as lesson observations made by the researcher, there was little prominence given to those who were learning and particularly how they were learning to play. The main emphasis of this research was on the teacher.

Holmes (1990) conducted fieldwork in an evening-class setting where the fiddle was being taught in the United States. This investigation focused primarily on the topic of aural instruction. From a review of a large body of literature related to the topic of learning and teaching by ear, Holmes identified components for a research-based model of aural instruction. A fiddle teacher who was considered by local folk

musicians and folk music students to be an “exemplary aural instructor” was then observed teaching in a group situation. It was found that the actions of this teacher closely resembled the model that had been devised. Again, more weight was given in this study to the teacher and teaching, rather than to the learners. In particular, little attention was given to the process of learning seen as a developmental change.

The investigation by Swing (1991) focused on fiddle teaching in both primary and secondary schools in Shetland Isles during the period 1973-1985. Here again the theme of the work was largely teacher oriented. Swing analysed the revival of the Shetland fiddle tradition in the school setting as an example of an “invention of tradition” as teachers selectively adapted the tradition being taught. One of her findings was that the fiddle tuition in schools, which trained students to be concert musicians rather than to play for dancing, has led to a “crisis of context” as there were only limited opportunities for fiddlers to perform on stage in Shetland and over 700 students had received fiddle lessons. Another finding which relates to the learner point of view was that a “dynamic of rebellion” was identified amongst students as they matured to form their own approach to playing the fiddle. Although this work contains valuable information on the musical histories and teaching styles of the fiddle instructors investigated, and considers the reactions of some of the students to the teaching they received, there is less emphasis again on learning seen as a developmental process.

Dabczynski (1994), however, has addressed the perspectives of both teacher and learner in some detail. He conducted an intensive ethnographic investigation of a summer camp at Ashokan in New York State where fiddle and dance were taught. The purposes of his study were to describe the characteristics of the fiddle teaching and learning which occurred within the camp context, to discuss the effect of the

camp experience on selected student attendees, including the author, and to describe viable characteristics which could be included in a school string program. The methods used to collect data included questionnaires, audio-tape and video-tape data collection and analysis, interviews, case-studies, participant observation and document analysis. In addition to conducting a survey among participants at the camp, Dabczynski drew out three case-study informants who were learning to play the fiddle.

This study provides a valuable source of information on why people were participating at the camp and about the teachers and styles of teaching there. Some of the reasons that individuals had for attending included the desire to acquire new repertoire, the wish to improve their playing, and the wish to interact with “highly competent teaching models”. Another was for the social/musical interaction with other students. Indeed, one of the main findings of this investigation was that the camp provided a sense of community for its participants. The investigation also provides some information on the actual *process* of learning, for example, by considering the ways in which case-study informants learned tunes and used tape recorders to assist them in the learning process. Some of “the impediments to learning” which concerned technical and general learning process difficulties were also researched. In this context Dabczynski found, for instance, that the traditional aural context associated with fiddle learning caused problems to some of the students who were more used to a visually-oriented learning framework. The “non-formalised” and “non-mediated” learning context of the fiddle group additionally caused difficulties for participants who were used to a more structured approach to teaching and learning. However, fiddlers only occasionally spoke of specific problems with technique as impediments to their ability to learn fiddle tunes.

In a study based in Cape Breton Island, Canada, Garrison (1985) undertook a comparative investigation of what she termed “traditional” and “non-traditional” teaching and learning practices relating to the fiddle. This ethnographic study compared the learning experiences of Cape Breton fiddlers who had learned in informal or non-traditional contexts with fiddlers who were learning in more formal educational contexts and particularly in six evening, weekend and school fiddle classes. This was a wide-ranging investigation which focused on 78 practising fiddlers and 49 beginning and continuing fiddle class students. One conclusion from the study was that it was possible to maintain most of the traditional teaching and learning practices in the context of a fiddle class. However, as a result of the large number of informants involved, there was little scope in this investigation for detailed comment on individuals and particularly on the process of learning. In the view of the present researcher, a particular difficulty inherent in this work is one of establishing clearly the details of past learning practices given the fallibility of human recall. The problems of considering learning retrospectively are detailed further below.

Another work that is relevant to the present investigation is the study of Adler (1980) who focused on the learning of a tradition amongst amateur bluegrass banjo players in the United States. Drawing from observations, interviews and recorded material he described how banjoists acquired competence on the instrument, the thesis being that an improvisational tradition like bluegrass must be grounded upon the acquisition of competence in the form of rules and formulae rather than specific fixed musical pieces. Adler divided competence into three aspects for discussion: musical, paramusical (e.g. the kinds of knowledge that inform the music-making) and cultural/contextual. He also devised a model showing the idealised sequence of competence acquisition. Broadly, this demonstrated that ideally the banjoist



commenced by *listening* to the music of the banjo before beginning to *play* the instrument. Steps in the model, for instance, show the progression of a would-be banjoist from being 1) an encultured individual; to 2) an auditor, 3) a competent listener, 4) an inceptor, 5) a beginning banjoist, and finally 6) a competent banjoist. This study is particularly useful in that it deals with the discussion of learning to play the banjo in a systematic way and provides considerable insights into the learning process.

The work of Frisch (1987) is also of particular interest as far as the present investigation is concerned because it focuses on the accounts of *adult* learners. Frisch described his own experiences of attending a week-long fiddle class for beginners within the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop in West Virginia and included information on his own musical background, how the teacher introduced material to the class, the reactions of the class and the author to the teaching, and some of the resistances that students had to the teaching. This account is useful in that it provides an insight into the individual nature of the learning experience in the group situation and offers a direct insight into the learning process.

Also in the United States, Guntharp (1980) considered how fiddlers in the Buffalo Valley of central Pennsylvania learned their art. He isolated three distinct steps in the learning process based on the experiences of the fiddlers investigated together with his own: 1) initial introduction to and acquaintance with the instrument 2) the development of specific bowing techniques and patterns to effect rhythmic punctuation and 3) the incorporation of ornamentation into simple tunes to vary and enliven basic melodies (1980:39). Part of this investigation was based on gathering information on how older fiddlers learned to play the instrument. The work of Feldman and O'Doherty (1985) which considers fiddle playing in County Donegal



and County Tyrone in Ireland is additionally concerned to some extent with this theme. A similar trend of asking older traditional musicians, often aged fifty and upwards, how they learned to play is apparent in the studies (detailed in Chapter One) of Macdonald (1976), Cooke (1986) and Miller (1986). Such an approach is understandable, however, given that each of these authors was in part concerned with trying to find out about “traditional” styles of fiddling or how music-making was undertaken in the past.

Taking these various studies which deal with traditional music learning together, several themes begin to emerge. Firstly, a number of these investigations have looked retrospectively at how informants *learned* to play an instrument. Whilst finding out how older players learned their art is valuable, there are nevertheless limitations to this procedure. Asking individuals to describe how they learned to play an instrument is expecting them to describe something that happened some, and often many, years previously. However, it is well known that retrospective biographical information is limited in the amount of detail that can be reliably recalled due to the fallibility of human memory (O'Neill, 1996:14).

Howe and Sloboda emphasise this point quite strongly in their comments on the problems surrounding accounts of learning to play a musical instrument from early childhood:

Unfortunately, most of the evidence concerning the early stages of children's progress that is actually now available was obtained many years after the childhoods in question. It was typically supplied at a time when the individuals concerned were in middle or late adulthood. The passage of time, and processes of selective forgetting and reinterpretation, render many of the accounts less than wholly reliable. (1991:39)

However, perhaps of more significance than the distance in time may be the psychological distance between enactive knowledge and verbal consciousness: individuals may not be able to describe a great deal about how they learned because they may not have been particularly conscious of the learning process at the time the learning occurred. In other words, the fact that an individual might know how to do something does not necessarily mean that they are able also to describe how they actually came to do it. For both of these reasons, asking someone to say in retrospect how they *learned* to play a musical instrument, may not be a particularly effective approach to documenting the learning process in a detailed way.

The second theme in the studies reviewed above is that few have seriously tried to consider the actual process of learning a musical instrument -- envisaged as a developmental change for learners. There may be several reasons why the process of learning has been largely ignored by researchers. Firstly, as we have just seen, the fact that the study of learning has usually been undertaken retrospectively means that it is difficult to obtain detailed data about what specifically was involved in the process of learning. Secondly, researchers have generally been more interested in observing the actions of the teacher than those of the learners. Thirdly, part of the learning process is generally agreed to be an *internal* one which takes place within the mind of an individual, making it difficult for a researcher to view. This last point is emphasised by the "conditioning school of thought". Adherents believe that since processes such as thinking, conceptualising, believing and feeling cannot be observed, then they have no part in a scientific approach to learning (Boydell, 1976:3). Instead, the focus of these scholars is on observing behavioural activity as a response to a stimulus. The physical study of the process of learning, then, is problematic. A fourth reason for the lack of emphasis on learning processes, however, may relate to the wider trend in ethnomusicology whereby scholars have



often talked broadly about issues of change and stability but have not developed research strategies for looking at change *in progress* (Blacking, 1990:265). However, as we have seen, the work of Dabczynski (1994), Adler (1980) and particularly Frisch (1987), have recently begun to give more emphasis to this issue.

The examination of selected literature in this section, and particularly that which deals with traditional music in a group learning context, leads to the contention that whilst quite a lot is known about the teaching of traditional music, there is a distinct gap in our understanding of the process of learning traditional music. The dearth of attention paid to this area means that questions such as how individuals approach the task of learning, and what the experience of learning is like for them remain largely unresearched. If we are to fully comprehend how the skills of playing a musical instrument are attained, it is evident that there is a particular need for studies which consider people who are *actually in the process of learning*.

### *Transmission*

A key concept that appears explicitly in most of the above research studies dealing with traditional music is *transmission*. Indeed, the term “transmission” is currently widely applied in the ethnomusicological literature dealing with the teaching and learning of music. There are also other situations in which the term is used, for example, transmission as a process of communication in studies of the mass media and organisational cultures, but this sense is not so relevant to the present discussion.

Transmission as a concept and as a term has long been employed in ethnomusicology and in the predecessor of the discipline, comparative musicology. It thus represents an established way of describing situations where music is taught and learned. The

following account given by McPhee<sup>2</sup>, referring to music-making in Bali is illuminating with regard to its usage:

. . . the teacher does not seem to teach, certainly not from our standpoint. He is merely the transmitter; he simply makes concrete the musical idea which is to be handed on, sets the example before the pupils and leaves the rest to them. . . . No allowance is made for the youth of the musicians; it never occurs to the teacher to employ any method other than the one he is accustomed to use when teaching adult groups. He explains nothing, since, for him, there is nothing to explain. If there are mistakes he corrects them; his patience is great. But he plays everything far too fast, even from the beginning, and it is up to the children to follow him as best they can. (1938:11)

Thus in this passage dating from the 1930s, we obtain the essence of the meaning of transmission as used in situations relating to the teaching and learning of music. It is a view which still tends to prevail. The teacher is viewed as the transmitter; as an agent who transmits musical matter to the learners. According to this description, it is the teacher who appears to have the more active role in the process with the learners following as best they can. Further, the learners are not seen as individuals but rather are viewed more as a homogenous group reacting en masse to the actions of the teacher. Hence, the weight of the description is placed on outlining the behaviour of the teacher; the reactive behaviour of the learners, receives little attention.

The following passage by Campbell is an example of the contemporary, somewhat expanded, use of transmission in the context of teaching and learning:

The brilliant art and folk traditions of the world are transmitted in various ways: from teacher to student, from master to apprentice, from father to son, and through formal and informal experiences. (1991:186)

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<sup>2</sup> McPhee, Colin (1938) "Children and Music in Bali", *Djawa*, 18, 1-14. Cited in Merriam (1964:152-3).

Thus, the essential meaning of the term with regard to the teaching and learning of music appears to have changed little since the 1930s. The underlying idea here again is clearly one of a transfer of musical information -- in this case of a tradition -- from one person to another, where there are two agents in the process. Further, the fact that these two agents are sometimes viewed and termed as the “transmitter” and “receiver” respectively (Campbell, 1991), connects with the use of communication theory to explain how musical traditions and other information are conveyed (Pentikäinen, 1976:15) where these terms are commonly used<sup>3</sup>. This sense is also analogous to the teacher and learner view of transmission, however, in that it has been applied to individuals as learners who, instead of acting on their own initiative and motivation, are frequently viewed as rather passive, anonymous recipients.

As well as the central role that transmission plays in the ethnomusicological literature, it has also been an important concept for folkloristics and in the study of oral forms (Finnegan, 1992:112). In all these various fields, it is frequently linked to the term “tradition” with which it is etymologically close. Nettl notes:

The way in which a tradition is passed on is called transmission [Nettl’s emphasis], and the two terms are sometimes used, informally and perhaps colloquially, to emphasize two sides of the character of a culture or indeed of a music -- its stability on the one hand, its tendency to change on the other. (1982:3)

Here, Nettl’s definition of transmission highlights that, generally speaking, there are in fact *two* similar but distinct meanings of the term: firstly in the specific sense of explaining how skills are learned from a teacher by a pupil, and secondly in the broader context of explaining how traditions are passed on, or are continued within a

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<sup>3</sup> These terms are also found in discussions on reception theory (Duesenberry, 1996).

community<sup>4</sup>. Like “tradition”, however, the term transmission has also been poorly defined and can incorporate a variety of meanings. One outcome of this may be that transmission is used in conjunction with a wide range of adjectives such as oral and written (Jeffery, 1992); aural, formal (Kaeppler, 1985), and informal. In particular, much has been written about oral and written transmission and an investigation of the use of these terms could form the basis of a critical and scholarly enquiry in itself.

Despite the variety of meanings and uses attached to the transmission concept, there is now general agreement amongst scholars that the transmission of music includes both *product* and *process*. Bohlman refers to this understanding in the context of oral tradition:

The dialectic of oral tradition consists of both products and the processes by which these products are derived. For folk music, the product is the discrete entity -- the song, the record of a single performance, a version of the unit of transmission -- whereas the process is the continuation of transmission. (1988:25)

In practice, however, most researchers have been concerned principally with investigating the *product*. Further, this preoccupation may have had implications for our understanding of the process of transmission. To illustrate this, let us consider the views prevailing in the nineteenth century.

It is well known that, during the nineteenth century, scholars were far more interested in considering *traditions* than how these were actually learned. Those who had acquired competence in a tradition within a particular community were normally viewed as “inheritors” of it. Further, the learning of a tradition was often assumed to

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<sup>4</sup> With reference to the latter context see, for example, the discussions by Treitler (1986) on the transmission of music in the European Middle Ages and Booth (1986) on North Indian tabla transmission.

involve nothing more than memorisation or rote-learning of some sort (Adler, 1980:6). Individual creativity was also not widely accepted, except in an imprecise way. Bohlman writes:

The tendency of folk music research devoid of individual musicians is to homogenize time and tradition, to reduce them along with the role of folk musicians to an innocuous sameness. The older a tradition, the fewer the individual influences. Should a tradition have primordial wellsprings, the absence of composition at the point of inception would further justify the absence of recognizable musicians over time. And so transmission exists *sui generis*. It does not require individual efforts to provide it with energy. Transmission, then, acquires a preeminent position. The human role in the maintenance of this position is one of passing music on to subsequent generations, ideally without introducing any change, even if it means suppressing individuality. The folk musician should be merely a tradition-bearer. . . . What the folk musician receives, the folk musician transmits. (1988:71)

Thus, in the transmission of music the human element was taken out -- individuals were simply seen as the vehicles involved in the passing on of traditions. In addition, scholars were more interested in focusing on the group or community rather than the responses of the individual. Transmission, therefore, prevailed as more of a “community concept” which explained how traditions were passed on.

The tradition-oriented concept of transmission is also evident in nineteenth century accounts by the antecedents of today’s ethnomusicologists who travelled outside the West. Even though these scholars came across educational situations where they encountered individuals who were recognisable as “teachers”, such individuals were often perceived according to the researchers’ own familiar cultural categories of figures of special authority. Indeed, such teachers, being “gurus” or masters within a ritualised context, were typically viewed as “exotic” versions of the Western elite concept of a “teacher”. The *Guru-Shishya-Parampara* (Master-Disciple-Tradition) of India (Fletcher, 1987:97), for instance, common to many Asian “art” musics, is



typical of the kind of teacher-pupil relationship which Western travellers observed in India during the last century, and indeed continue to observe at the present day (Slawek, 1993). (See also Balinese example above, p. 53).

Some of the situations that these travellers viewed would have undoubtedly been a little like the following modern day description of storytelling in China. This passage details the formal procedures that a student, who, in most cases is already familiar with the “fundamentals” of storytelling, may undertake in order to acquire a performer to teach him his speciality story:

With the agreement of that performer, the student will submit a piece of paper on which he writes “Student X respectfully requests the honour of Y to be his teacher.” . . . As was done in old times, the student needs to arrange a banquet, . . . to formally announce the establishment of this teacher-student relationship. (Tsao, 1986:226)<sup>5</sup>

As a result of focusing on such teaching situations, however, scholars may have confirmed their already dominant views about the authoritarian and disciplinary nature of the teacher. This, in turn, may have led researchers to overemphasise the contribution that a teacher actually makes for someone who is learning. In addition, these views may have been unconsciously applied to other teaching and learning systems where such conceptions were in fact less appropriate.

There are further problems with the notion of transmission in the teacher-pupil context. In particular, there are difficulties in viewing it simply as being a *transfer* of skills and information -- two quite different operations which involve a range of cognitive and sensori-motor activities -- from teacher to pupil, from father to son, and from one person to another. Implicit in this interpretation seems to be the notion that

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<sup>5</sup> Moreover, this is not just a non-Western phenomenon as there are similarities between the teacher-student relationship in this particular tradition and that found in the piping tradition in Scotland, where the relationship often goes beyond that of simply having lessons (see further, Mackenzie, 1998).

if a learner has had a piece of music transmitted from the teacher or some other agent, he or she will somehow become competent at performing that piece. Indeed, this view implies that a student's learning is *directly* and even *wholly* dependent on the teacher or the transmission. The fact that the term is often used casually and causally makes the process seem a simple one. In reality, however, the specifics of the transmission process have very seldom been analysed.

Knowles, although not talking especially about the learning of music, calls for a re-thinking of the established view of the centrality of the teacher and the action of transmission in the learning process:

In our inherited folk wisdom there has been a tendency to look upon education as the transmittal of information, to see learning as an almost exclusively intellectual process consisting of the storing of accumulated facts in the filing drawers of the mind. The implicit assumption underlying this view of learning is that it is essentially an external process in the sense that what the student learns is determined primarily by outside forces, such as the excellence of the teacher's presentation, the quality of reading materials, and the effectiveness of school discipline. . . . A growing body of research into what really happens when learning takes place has put this traditional conception of learning in serious jeopardy. Although there is not yet agreement on the precise nature of the learning process (in fact there are many theories which seem to explain different parts of it), there is agreement that it is an internal process controlled by the learners and engaging their whole being -- including, intellectual, emotional, and physiological functions. (1980:55-6)

Nicol (1997) also concurs with many of these views. Clearly, from this perspective it can be seen that the acquisition of new information or skills (i.e. learning) is construed as an *internal* process. It is something which happens *within* the learner, not something which the teacher does for, or to, the learner. Information cannot simply be transferred from teacher to pupil, and neither is the learner a passive

receptor of instructions from the teacher<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, viewing the process of transmission as a transfer of information from teacher to pupil tells us little about how skills are actually learned. Moreover, in relation to music, it is not the case that a pupil will have an automatic playing competency because he has received instruction from a teacher. And whilst the teacher may be one influential factor in a student's learning, he/she is certainly not the only one.

The "taxonomy of learning" devised by Benjamin Bloom also underpins the proposition that the transmission model in the teacher-pupil context is problematic. Peters and Miller (1982) have applied Bloom's work to musical learning. Their interpretation of the taxonomy shows that there are stages in the acquisition of skills and that learning is about more than simply attaining cognitive skills; mental and tactile skills are also important. Thus, an activity like learning to play the fiddle, for example, would involve a complex set of sensori-motor operations. Firstly, the fact that a learner must go through steps to learn something casts doubt on the concept of transmission and its inherent notions of immediacy. Secondly, the fact that tactile skills must be acquired by the learner also casts doubt on the concept, since tactile skills must surely be learned by the students *themselves*. They cannot be transferred from the teacher to the pupil.

Adler has also questioned the nature of the transmission process with regard to learning music. He makes the following observation concerning established views about learning in folklore:

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<sup>6</sup> The seminal work of Nattiez (1990), who discusses the problems in the idea prevalent amongst many scholars that the meaning of a text can be transferred from a producer to a receiver, also has parallels here and relates to the problem of musical communication generally. The essence of his argument is that meaning must be constructed to a particular form by an individual. Further, it cannot be guaranteed that the meaning of the text will be the same for each person. This conception also connects with constructivist views of learning (see below).

At best, the stress on transmission likened the human beings involved to radio stations; a folklore message was offered by one and received by another, (or, more likely by an anonymous group) and "learning" meant only that a message had been sent, received, and memorized. (1980:7)

Kleeman (1985-6:22) is another who notes the complexities involved in the transmission of music. Despite these critiques, however, there are still many scholars who use the term transmission unreflectively and who continue to view learning simply as the accumulation of what has been transmitted. Perhaps this is because sometimes the process appears to happen naturally, effortlessly and non-creatively. Therefore, and as a consequence, its rationale has been accepted in a rather unreflective fashion.

Some of the difficulties implicit in this traditionally accepted model of transmission were also borne out by fieldwork undertaken for the present study and are discussed in context in succeeding chapters.

### **Adult learning**

As this study deals specifically with adult learners, it is now necessary to review some of the literature in this area which has a direct bearing on the main theme of this investigation. A starting point is that, in the professional discipline of adult education, adult learning is perceived as being distinctively different from child learning. The difference between the two is underlined by Knowles (1980) who gave these areas of activity entirely separate terms: *andragogy* for the former, and *pedagogy* for the latter. He summarizes the characteristics of andragogy thus:

. . . andragogy is premised on at least these four crucial assumptions about the characteristics of learners that are different from the assumptions on which traditional pedagogy is premised. These assumptions are that as individuals mature: 1) their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being; 2) they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning; 3) their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their

social roles; and 4) their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance-centeredness. (1980:44-5)

According to this view, then, it appears that the adult may come to a new learning situation with different perspectives from that of a child. In a similar vein Beatty, Benefield and Linhart note:

Adults come to a new learning situation with a sense of themselves which has been shaped by their cumulative life experiences. These include self-concepts and self-esteem, past successes and failures as learners, attitudes and values, potential assets and possible liabilities, and directly or indirectly related experiences and skills. (1991:171)

Another significant concept relevant to the present work which has emerged in recent years and received considerable attention in social and educational literature is that of *lifelong learning*. According to Knowles (1980:19) the basic premise underlying lifelong learning is that “in a world of accelerating change learning must be a lifelong process.” Typical motivations for a lifelong learning activity are that adults embark on the learning of a new skill in order to better their employment prospects or for personal development reasons. Cropley (1977:118) outlines the psychological nature of the typical lifelong learner. He asserts that the learner will be 1) cognitively well-equipped, e.g. familiar with a variety of disciplines and skills; 2) highly educable, e.g. possessed of different learning strategies and able to learn in a variety of setting such as alone, in groups, and so on; and 3) motivated to carry on a process of lifelong learning, e.g. aware of the rapidity of change and of its effects on social life, knowledge and job skills and aware of learning as a primary tool for personal and societal growth. Further, the concept of lifelong learning is a particularly robust framework as it embraces both informal and more formalised aspects of continuing education. Central to lifelong learning is the idea of *self-directed learning*.

### *Self-directed learning*

One of the themes which has received a great deal of attention in the education and social policy fields in recent years is that of self-directed learning. Candy summarises the variety of meanings that “self-direction” can assume:

. . . the term *self-direction* actually embraces dimensions of process and product, and . . . it refers to four distinct (but related) phenomena: “self-direction” as a personal attribute (personal autonomy); “self-direction” as the willingness and capacity to conduct one’s own education (self-management); “self-direction” as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control); and “self-direction” as the individual, noninstitutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the “natural societal setting” (autodidaxy). (1991:22-23)

At the heart of all these meanings of “self-direction” is the idea that the “learner”, who in Candy’s context is thought of as being an adult, can conduct his or her own education and learning with or without the aid of a teacher. Indeed, throughout the literature on modern adult learning theory the teacher is frequently viewed as, and referred to, as a *facilitator* (Brookfield, 1986). The teacher’s role is to *facilitate* learning by the student, by, for example, providing resources and structuring learning activities. Cropley (1977:133), for example, points out that as well as being a “facilitator”, other conceptualisations of the role of the teacher include an “educational consultant”, a “leader”, a “specialist in learning methods”, and a “co-ordinator of learning”. These perspectives of the learner and teacher contrast with the traditional views of each party commonly found in ethnomusicology, where the teacher is viewed as an individual who is seen as being primarily responsible for transmitting information. Indeed, one result of viewing the teacher as facilitator, evident in the recent education literature, is that the term “transmission” is very seldom used, reflecting the diminished emphasis on the view of learning as information acquisition from the teacher.

*Learning and teaching: A transactional process*

Another viewpoint commonly found in the literature on adult learning theory is the notion of the teaching and learning process as being a transactional process. Galbraith (1991:25) is one such author who describes the teaching and learning process as being a transaction. He notes that "when you engage in an educational encounter, the psychological and social dimensions of the teaching and learning process mesh to create a dynamic process." The essence of the teaching and learning process, then, as seen by Galbraith is a collaborative encounter between the teacher and the pupil. This also represents a different view from that which envisages the purpose of the teacher as being principally a "transmitter". In a similar vein, Brookfield (1991) explores the idea of grounding teaching in learning. This involves considering the ways in which people actually learn material and from these insights devising the best ways to teach them. Here, again, is rather a different perspective on teaching from the perception of it as a didactic activity.

The concept of *constructivism*, has also recently come to the fore in adult education. The notion espoused by the adherents to this principle is that knowledge cannot be taught but must be constructed by the learner (Candy, 1991:252). This concept, too, has implications for the view that researchers might take of those learning. Perkins writes:

Constructivism has multiple roots in the psychology and philosophy of this century . . . Central to the vision of constructivism is the notion of the organism as "active" -- not just responding to stimuli, as in the behaviorist rubric, but engaging, grappling, and seeking to make sense of things.

In particular, learners do not just take in and store up given information. They make tentative interpretations of experience and go on to elaborate and test those interpretations. (1992:49)



Taking these various points together, then, what emerges is that the figure of the learner is increasingly seen as being at the centre of recent research and conceptualisation in modern adult learning theory. This is underpinned by Knowles who comments as follows about changes that have taken place in educational research, culminating in a shift away from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning:

. . . we began to be interested in finding out more about the natural processes of learning -- focusing on what happens inside the learner rather than on what the teacher does. Out of this line of thinking came a new emphasis on education as a process of facilitating self-directing learning and a redefinition of the role of teacher as a facilitator of self-directed learning and a resource to self-directed learners. (1980:19)

Such changes in the focus of investigations and the adoption of this alternative viewpoint about the role of the teacher as facilitator appear to have several implications for the present work. Appropriately, the standpoint adopted in this study is that *these* perspectives are particularly relevant to situations in which adults are learning traditional music in a classroom setting.

### *Music learning by adults*

Before this section on adult learning is drawn to a close, it is necessary to look briefly at selected literature relating specifically to music learning by adults. According to Olseng and Burley, little research has been devoted to this topic:

When we look at adult education in *music* . . . , the situation is still very much the same as it was twenty years ago. It is our impression that the adult learner is a rather neglected species in music education. The adult stands last in line and gets the least attention when opportunities are provided, methods are developed, text-books are written, research is undertaken and music teachers are trained. (1987:28)

Peters and Miller (1982) note a similar predicament. Compared to the attention given to music education issues in relation to children, much less thought has gone

into addressing how best to teach adults, for example by developing courses which specifically address adults' needs. Further, this situation has continued to prevail. Although the study by Sanchez (1987) which considers how adults learn to improvise jazz at the piano in an adult education class represents one exception to this pattern, few research studies on the topic of music learning by adults have emerged in the decade following this investigation.

### **The process of learning**

A central theme that has run through this chapter is the need for more research on the *process* of learning in ethnomusicology. However, thus far, the question of what the process of learning actually is has not been explicitly addressed. The simple definition of learning made by Peters and Miller (1982:114), as we have already seen, has been adopted as being appropriate for the present investigation, namely that: "*Learning is a developmental process, based on experience, that causes a change in behavior.*" It will be useful here to briefly outline some of the key perspectives on this topic that are relevant to the present study and particularly to adult learning.

Earlier it was contended that it can be helpful to view the learning process partly as an *internal* one. Learning is also complex. Part of this complexity stems from the fact that there are assumed to be three aspects of mental functioning which have a particular bearing on the learning process: the cognitive domain which relates to knowledge acquisition, the psychomotor domain that is concerned with the connection of the mind to motor skills and the affective domain which includes feelings and values (Peters and Miller, 1982). According to the stage-dependent theory of Piaget, the adult learner is already well developed in his or her cognitive capacity for music. This theory states that children pass through four stages of thinking and at the fourth stage, termed "formal operations", which generally takes

place from approximately age eleven throughout adulthood, individuals are capable of learning abstractly with logic and deductive reasoning (Campbell, 1991:85-6).

Motivation is also important to learning: "In any educational setting, . . . motivation is essential to the efficiency of the learning experience" (Peters and Miller, 1982:122). Two main types of motivation have been identified:

Extrinsic motivation is supplied by the promise of reward, or the threat of punishment. . . . Intrinsic motivation is motivation supplied by the activity in itself. The activity is inherently rewarding, interesting, enjoyable, challenging. This is a much stronger form of motivation. It tends to persist, and it tends to encourage creativity and innovation. (Sloboda, 1987:28)

According to this viewpoint, then, it appears that intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation may be of particular importance where the adult learner is concerned.

Two further ideas have also been particularly influential in ethnomusicology to explain how learning is achieved. One is *imitation* (often called modelling) where the student attempts to mimic the actions and behaviour of another using their visual and aural senses. Indeed, imitation in the form of watching and listening is especially important to learning in "folk" societies (Cooke, 1978). The other is *enculturation* which ". . . refers to the process by which the individual learns his culture, and it must be emphasized that this is a never-ending process continuing throughout the life span of the individual." (Merriam, 1964:146) Enculturation, therefore, as a lifelong process is of particular relevance in terms of the behaviour of the adult learner.

### *Practice*

Another key activity in the process of learning a musical instrument, recognised as significant by most researchers, is *practice*. Indeed, practice is not only a

fundamental element in this area, it is a crucial factor in the acquisition of most skills. Sloboda writes:

A large body of psychological observation, both formal and informal, supports the proposition that there are three essential elements in the learning of any skill, a means of coding or structuring the material to be learned, repeated opportunities to practice the skill, and motivation to persist in engagement with the skill. (1987:26)

Despite the importance of practice in the learning process, however, there are, in fact, very few studies concerned exclusively with the practice of musical instruments in ethnomusicology, although the topic is quite often mentioned, as Merriam explains:

Accounts of practicing are encountered fairly frequently in the ethnomusicological literature, though they tend to be primarily descriptive of the fact rather than providing accounts of how practicing is carried on or what proportion of the musician's time is given to it. (1964:159)

Thus, reports of practice tend not to go into much detail. From existing descriptions, however, it becomes apparent that practice on a musical instrument may have varying significance to musicians operating in different musical cultures. Neuman, for example, describes his experiences of practice in the classical music tradition of India:

If a musician wants to celebrate the genius of another musician, he will do so not so much in terms of musical accomplishments, which are taken for granted (and do not easily lend themselves to verbal description), but in terms of practice habits. The amazing feats of a musician's accomplishments are described not so much with reference to pyrotechnics, but with respect to accomplishments of discipline and perseverance in practice. . . . Often when I met musicians, the first thing they asked me was whether I had been practicing hard; and while saying this, one would take my left hand and look at my nails and cuticles for the "hard" evidence. (1990:31)

Research into practising musical instruments has also been rather neglected in other disciplines outwith ethnomusicology. Hallam (1995:3) observes: "Although musicians spend a considerable amount of time practising, historically there has been little research into the ways in which they go about it." It is possible, however, that this situation relates to the suggestion of Howe (1990:91) that the degree to which practice is important in acquiring any non-trivial skill may have been underestimated.

Of the studies that have focused on the practice which people undertake a number have looked at the activities of professional musicians (Hallam, 1995) or successful child musicians (Howe and Sloboda, 1991). The practice that "amateur" musicians engage in, however, has been given less attention. Yet, in terms of skill acquisition on a musical instrument, the practice that the amateur undertakes is surely no less important than that of the professional. Two studies which have included a component of research on the practice undertaken by non-professional musicians, however, are those of Lehmann (1997) and Gruson (1988). The former illustrates the importance of early training and optimisation of practice in general and supervised practice in particular, and the latter found that practice strategies amongst students changed as they acquired increasing musical knowledge and expertise.

Another feature of previous studies relating to practice on musical instruments is that they have tended to focus on the Western classical music tradition (e.g. Hallam, 1995; Howe and Sloboda, 1991; and Gruson, 1988), often with a view to developing strategies relating to the "best" or most efficient ways of practising. However, we also need to know more about *what kind* of practice those engaged in learning other genres such as traditional music and jazz undertake, as well as how important practice is to these musicians.

Studies of practice have also frequently been conducted in laboratory type situations (e.g. Gruson, 1988). We must be aware, however, that this approach has its limitations, as the laboratory environment, being an unfamiliar situation to most people, may cause individuals to modify their patterns of normal behaviour. Cole (1996), for instance, in his seminal work on cultural psychology, is one who argues for the need for studies of human behaviour to be situated in culture and context, if realistic data on behaviour is to be obtained.

In addition, the investigation of music practice is a special case of the general problems associated with collecting fieldwork observations in any context where research is taking place. Given that practice might be most commonly understood as the playing that an individual undertakes in *solitary* circumstances in order to improve, the objective study of this sort of behaviour is not going to be easy. Indeed, the presence of a researcher as an observer in such a setting could be particularly problematic, causing the performer to change what he or she is doing for various reasons, resulting in problems with the reliability of data.

Scrutiny of some of the literature on practice also reveals that the term “practice” is seldom explicitly defined by researchers (e.g. Coffman, 1990; Gruson 1988; Hallam, 1995; and Sloboda, 1985). This may be because its meaning has been somewhat taken for granted. Nevertheless, it does seem important to provide a definition of the term as, in certain musical cultures, the distinction between what constitutes “practice” and what constitutes “performance” is subjective. In the milieu of the Scots fiddle tradition, for example, practice might encompass such things as the solitary playing that a fiddler undertakes on the instrument at home, the playing that occurs in a fiddle lesson where a teacher is present, and the playing that a fiddler undertakes in the company of others (e.g. in a session). In addition, listening to or

playing the instrument along with a recorded source, and whistling or singing a fiddle tune might be considered by certain players to be forms of practice. The term also has a social definition in that one may attend “a practice” with others. Furthermore, within the culture of Scots fiddle playing it is quite common for traditional fiddle players not to use the term “practice” at all. Instead, expressions such as “playing” or “having a tune” might be used to refer to this activity. The difficulties of adequately defining the term are discussed further in Chapter Three where the reasoning behind the particular operational definition used in the present study is given.

## **Summary of Chapter Two**

This chapter has examined some of the key themes in existing research which have a direct bearing on this study and has thus established some of the frameworks for the investigation. It began by noting that the study of teaching and learning is a relatively new focus in ethnomusicology and that there is a particular need for research into the process of learning as most work to date has been concerned with the product. Further, the fact that studies of traditional music education in group settings have tended to examine the role and the actions of the teacher also points to the fact that additional examination of those learning is required.

Literature on the concept of transmission as it has been used in teacher-student contexts has also been reviewed in this chapter. A number of authors working in various disciplines have pointed to the fact that there are problems with the concept and particularly with the notion that musical or other kinds of information and skills can be “passed on” from one person to another. In addition, it was noted that the traditional framework of transmission found in ethnomusicology contrasts in important ways with certain ideas current in literature relating to adult education (e.g.



the notion of the adult learner being self-directed). The topic of transmission is pursued further in the following chapter.

Lastly, key themes relating to the process of learning have been examined. One issue to emerge here was that a number of researchers believe that practice is a very important part of the process of learning to play a musical instrument. Moreover, as Chapter Three will show, practice was also considered to be important by the group of adults involved in the field study component of this investigation.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter considers the methodology used for the study. A detailed account of the design of the study and of the methods used to obtain data are essential as aids to interpreting and understanding the study results and as a guide to other researchers who may wish to use a similar or related approach to data gathering in their own work. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first reports on the pilot investigation, describing how the researcher spent one year as a participant observer in a fiddle class attended by adult learners at the Adult Learning Project, Edinburgh. These early explorations were crucial in orienting the study as they pointed up the need for a more focused, in-depth investigation -- the "core investigation". The core investigation, discussed in the second section, reports on the field study carried out amongst six adult learners at the Adult Learning Project over the period of one term.

Although Chapters Two and Three are presented in sequence, suggesting that the researcher undertook a review of related literature and *then* went out into the field to collect data, this was not in fact the case. During the pilot investigation the researcher was constantly checking observations made in the classes against perspectives and viewpoints derived from the available literature. Indeed, it will become apparent in this chapter that the processes of reviewing literature and data gathering were iterative and reflexive ones.

### **The pilot investigation**

#### *The Adult Learning Project*

In April 1995, the researcher joined a fiddle class at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh as a fiddle learner. This early step was undertaken to help with developing insights for use in planning the study and was part of an exploratory stage in finding out more about how the teaching and learning of the fiddle was achieved.

The Adult Learning Project, or simply “ALP” as it is more commonly known and is sometimes referred to in this text, is based in the Gorgie Dalry area in the west of the city of Edinburgh. ALP, a City of Edinburgh Council Community Education organisation, was founded in 1979 on the principles of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1989), who stressed the benefits of education to all sections of society. A variety of subjects related to Scotland including history, language, politics and writing are taught at ALP in addition to traditional music. Classes in traditional music, however, are the responsibility of the “Scots Music Organising Group” -- a committee made up of staff from ALP and voluntary members<sup>1</sup>.

Traditional music classes normally take place on a weekly basis at ALP and the instruments that are taught there include fiddle, guitar, tin whistle, accordion and chanter. These classes are popular. In 1996, for instance, over 350 participants had enrolled (Adult Learning Project, 1996). Classes are offered at different levels of standard, ranging from beginner to advanced, in some instruments. The process of entering a class at ALP is one of “self-selection” in which the learner selects an appropriate level at which to study, fills out an enrolment form indicating his or her perceived standard of playing, and submits the required fee. A copy of an enrolment form for the 1996/97 session appears in Appendix 2. The cost of attending the classes is minimal and a concessionary rate is offered for certain categories of participants. Classes are attended mainly by adults, but there are also activities which are specifically held for children<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lockhart (1998) and Wilson (1995) for further information on the Scots Music Organising Group.

<sup>2</sup> In the Easter Holidays, for instance, ALP organises an event called the “Youth Gaitherin’ ” which lasts for approximately four days and is aimed at young people aged from nine to eighteen. In the 1996/97 session they also began offering the “Bairns’ Bash” on two evenings per week for children aged seven to fourteen years. This uses instruments and games to explore Scots Music and is primarily for the children of adults attending ALP Scots Music-Group Classes (ALP booklet, 1996/97).

Many of those who teach at ALP are professional or semi-professional musicians who make up a good part of their income from teaching traditional music, playing in bands, and playing at pub-sessions. These musicians are usually selected as teachers by ALP simply because they are well-known locally. In addition, it is quite common for adults who have learned at ALP to become teachers themselves within the organisation as well as with other groups<sup>3</sup>. Tunes are generally taught by ear at ALP -- without the aid of written notation -- and learners are encouraged to bring portable cassette players to class so that they can record repertoire. Sheet music is also sometimes handed out by the teacher at the end of a session so that participants can practise tunes at home. Generally speaking, the repertoire taught in classes consists mainly of tunes of Scots or Irish genre. In addition, classes are sometimes geared to teaching a particular style of fiddle playing, for example "West Highland" style.

#### *Researcher attendance at classes*

The fiddle class that the researcher chose to attend was held on Monday nights in a classroom at Tynecastle High School in Edinburgh. The level of this class was termed "Improving Beginners", which suited the researcher who, at that point, had limited experience of playing the instrument. Each fiddle class began at seven o'clock in the evening and lasted around two hours, with a short break in the middle of the lesson. The number of learners in the class varied from week to week. On average, around ten people would attend each lesson.

According to the researcher's observations, little verbal interchange generally took place between the teacher and students in class. Physical interaction also seldom occurred between the two. Indeed, the teacher normally remained in front of the

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<sup>3</sup> Rob Paul, a fiddle teacher who led a one day course at the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Edinburgh, for example, had attended fiddle lessons at ALP. Interestingly, he felt that the fact that he had learned as an adult was particularly helpful to him in teaching adults because he was "near to the learning process" (interview, 30 November 1995).

group and conducted the lesson from a seated position. However, although the learners sat behind desks facing the teacher, consistent with the usual formal daytime layout of a classroom, there was normally an atmosphere of fun and informality about the fiddle group. Following the meeting, it was common for learners to socialise and play the fiddle in a local pub or hotel. Playing in public at sessions and at other opportunities outwith lessons, such as at the end of term concert, is strongly encouraged by ALP.

Teaching sessions in the classes that the researcher attended broadly followed a standard pattern. This consisted of revising tunes at the beginning of the evening that had been introduced prior to the lesson (usually the previous week), and then learning new tunes. Generally speaking, two new tunes would be tackled in a session, one in the first hour and the other in the second. This pattern varied, however, depending on the particular teacher. Indeed, throughout the time that the researcher was in attendance, several different teachers were to lead the class. There was also considerable variation in the teaching methods that each used. One, for example, taught almost exclusively by ear, whereas another taught using sheet music with little emphasis on ear-playing. The method used by those who did teach by ear, however, was to divide a tune into smaller parts and then repeat these small sections many times. Gradually these sections would then be brought back together to form the whole tune. This technique is sometimes known as “chunk and link presentation” (Holmes, 1990).

The majority of the lesson time was spent on playing tunes rather than on scales or other exercises. Further, little attention was given by the class tutors to teaching technique, such as bow hold or how to hold the fiddle. Indeed, technique was generally something that the learners were left to “pick up” themselves. This relates

to the general style of teaching at ALP which focuses primarily on teaching tunes rather than technique. It may also relate to the fact that certain of the tutors that led the class had received no formal training in playing the fiddle themselves and, as a result, may have found it difficult, as well as considering it to be unnecessary, to teach technique.

Repertoire for the group was normally selected by the teacher, although occasionally a learner requested to learn a particular tune. Students generally tuned their own fiddles in class, but the teacher also helped with tuning the instruments where necessary. In addition, some of the students possessed electronic tuning devices to help them tune their fiddles. These were often shared with the other class members.

A common occurrence at the class was for certain learners to get there early and begin playing tunes together before the teacher arrived. In addition, the events of the past week in relation to work, family, and fiddle playing were often informally discussed. By contrast, however, certain other participants arrived consistently late, possibly due to social and domestic circumstances. One explanation for the late arrival of students was that some did not live within the boundaries of the city of Edinburgh. Indeed, one student that the researcher met travelled around sixty miles to attend the class each week and stayed overnight with a relative in Edinburgh following the lesson.

There also appeared to be a fairly high drop-out rate amongst students according to the researcher's observations. At the beginning of one term, for example, the researcher recorded a total of twenty attendees at the fiddle class. By the end of that term, however, this number had dropped to around six or seven participants who attended on a regular basis. The explanations why these participants did not continue

to attend were unclear to the researcher, although other members in the class gave several possible reasons. These included: logistical problems (i.e., travelling to and from the class); family ties and other commitments; and a lack of dedication to learning and practising the fiddle (see below p. 85).

The researcher spent over a year participating in these fiddle classes at the ALP, attending classes almost every monday night when they convened. Detailed notes were made by the researcher following meetings and each lesson was recorded using a portable cassette recorder. Although the researcher began learning in the Improving Beginners class, she graduated, along with several of her class-mates, to the Intermediate class in September 1995. In total, twenty-eight meetings of the classes were attended by the researcher prior to undertaking the core investigation.

### *Participant Observation*

The fact that the researcher joined the fiddle class as a learner meant that she was able to take on the role of a “participant observer”. Participant observation has been well documented in both ethnomusicological and anthropological text-books as a useful tool for data gathering in qualitative research. Myers (1992:29), for example, believes: “Participant observation enhances validity of the data, strengthens interpretation, lends insight into the culture, and helps the researcher to formulate meaningful questions.” From the researcher’s point of view this last point was of special significance as her entry to the classes was at an exploratory stage and formed the first step in seeking to chart the ground. It was through being a participant observer that the researcher was able to formulate many “meaningful questions” relating to these adult learners. Further, the technique of participant observation is a particularly effective method for gathering data in the study of music. Hood (1982:219), for example, notes that making music together “creates a bond between



the participants that is of a different order from that of the questioner and respondent.”

Through this participation as a learner in the fiddle class the researcher built up a rapport -- or a “bond” to use Hood’s expression -- with several of her class-mates. Although the learners in the class were aware that the researcher was initially attending classes primarily to formulate perspectives about research questions to pursue as well as to learn to play the fiddle, this did not mean that the researcher was viewed as being particularly different from the rest of the class. This was highlighted by the fact that the researcher and other learners in the class would often chat informally about learning the fiddle and sometimes met to socialise in sessions after the fiddle class. Such informal conversations brought home to the researcher the seriousness with which the adult learners undertook their fiddle playing -- to many of them it was more than just a “hobby”; they were passionate about it. Also, these conversations provided a variety of insights into the approaches and behaviours of class members which were to prove important in orienting the core investigation and how it would be undertaken. Moreover, the fact that the researcher became something of an “insider” in the fiddle class was attested to by the fact that later on, during her fieldwork at ALP, the researcher became the “class co-ordinator”. This post made her responsible for attending administrative meetings at the Adult Learning Project as an elected representative for the rest of the class.

Despite the fact that the researcher managed to achieve this insider status in the group, however, there were several ways in which she did not resemble the others in her class. Indeed, it will be useful here to comment briefly on the researcher’s experiences of attending the fiddle classes as other scholars have done (see, for instance, Frisch, 1987; and Dabczynski, 1994). Prior to attending the fiddle class the

researcher could already play another stringed instrument (the violoncello), possessed a degree in music, could play tunes by ear, and knew a good deal of the Scots fiddle repertoire. These experiences clearly had a significant bearing on her attempts at the fiddle as the researcher found that, whereas she could play the tunes that were introduced in class with little difficulty, the majority of the other learners in the class appeared, in general, to find such material challenging. Further, a number of participants seemed to have particular problems in learning tunes by ear. Indeed, as a result of the fact that the researcher's own experiences of learning the fiddle seemed to vary quite substantially from that of her colleagues, she has chosen not to go into further detail about her own learning in this thesis.

#### *Early focus of the pilot investigation*

For reasons which are detailed below, the focus of research at the beginning of the pilot investigation phase of the study gradually underwent a change. This section describes that change, as an understanding of the process of why the direction of research altered when it did is pivotal to comprehending the rationale behind the core investigation.

At the outset of the pilot investigation the intention of the researcher was primarily to observe the teacher in the class. As a result, the researcher had formulated basic research questions relating to the teacher, and hoped to consider, for instance, what was taught in class; how the instrument was being taught; why the teacher was teaching the fiddle; and how the teacher had learned to play the instrument. Indeed, in order to find out more about these general themes, the researcher conducted informal conversations with one of the teachers she met. There were a number of reasons for this teacher-focus. It has already been noted in Chapter Two that much previous research on the tuition of traditional music in formal settings has paid

particular attention to the role of the teacher. Moreover, the concept of “transmission” has a central place in the ethnomusicological literature dealing with learning to play a musical instrument. This concept, as I noted in the last chapter, stresses the importance of the teacher for those learning. The teacher is usually viewed as being responsible for transmitting information to learners who are generally thought of as being relatively passive receivers of this information. Against this background, then, the researcher, during her early visits to the fiddle classes, placed a premium on observing the transmission process “in action”. She believed that, at a basic level, what the teacher was teaching was being learned by the students. It was within this set of frameworks that the researcher initially began her field observations with the aim of identifying key issues which would be worthy of investigation.

Becker and Greer note the following with regard to the participant observer:

. . . the fact that the participant observer constantly redesigns his study as he uncovers new data deserves to be taken very seriously. It indicates that he engages in analytic activity most of the time that he is in the field. This analysis is often carried on unsystematically, without any consideration of its underlying logical structure or rationale. The observer’s “hunches” and “insights” are in fact truncated and unformalized acts of analysis. (1960:270-1)

It was as a result of just such reflection, or “unsystematic analysis”, based upon several months of observations made in the fiddle classes that the researcher began to see the need to switch the focus of research from a concentration on the teacher to one centred on the learners in the class, if detailed insights into how the instrument was actually learned were to be gained. At this stage it is necessary to give some key examples from the fieldwork in order to clarify why this change occurred.

It might be expected that, in a class where learners were normally being taught “by ear” -- as was the situation during the first few months of the pilot phase -- they would not be employing written notation to learn tunes. Observations the researcher made at the ALP class, however, suggested that this was not the case. One learner who subsequently took part in the core investigation, for instance, related during an informal conversation in the pilot phase how, if the sheet music for a tune was not handed out by the teacher at the end of the lesson, he would visit the Music Library in Edinburgh in order to obtain the written music for the tune.

Another student who was also later involved in the core investigation described how he would make his own transcription of a particular tune at home if he did not receive the sheet music for that tune in class. This transcription was based on the recording that he had made on his portable cassette recorder of the teacher’s playing.

In this same class, the researcher encountered another learner who made recordings of the tunes that the teacher introduced in the lesson and then took these home to his young son who was able to transcribe music. It was common for this learner to return to the fiddle group the following week, complete with transcriptions of tunes and photocopies of these transcriptions for anyone else who desired a copy.

Further, one student brought an entire collection of published fiddle books<sup>4</sup> with him to class each week. This learner appeared to refer to these in instances where the music for a particular tune was not handed out by the teacher. Moreover, according to my observations, it was usual for learners, where tunes were being taught by ear, to play facing the upturned lids of their fiddle cases which contained copies of sheet

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<sup>4</sup> These texts were: *Ceol na Fìdhle: Highland Tunes for the Fiddle* (vols. 1-4), compiled and arranged by Christine Martin. Skye: Taigh na Teud (Harpstring House). Vol. 1, new ed., 1991

music. This may have been consciously done to conceal, from the teacher, the fact that they were actually using written music.

It can be clearly seen from these various examples, then, that although the teacher was “teaching by ear”, it would not be an accurate statement to say that the students were “learning by ear”. The learners’ actions were in fact quite complex and involved a number of strategies which entailed them having access to musical notation. It became clear to the researcher from such examples that, if one only considered the actions of the teacher and paid no heed to the learners, a distorted picture would emerge which would not genuinely represent what was happening in the classroom.

An important implication arising out of the above observations, which became increasingly apparent as time went on during the pilot investigation, was that the concept of transmission as traditionally understood seemed questionable in the light of the real situation in the classes. Somehow the notion that “the teacher was transmitting information which the students were receiving” seemed too simple to capture the complex detail which was being uncovered on the ground.

Furthermore, in contrast to the simple model of learning implied by the transmission concept, many informal comments issuing from students related to the difficulties they as learners were having with learning a piece of music. Students made statements to the effect that they could not play a piece because they found it “too difficult” or that they were “getting lost”; and some, having been taught a new tune at one lesson, returned to the fiddle class the following week, still unable, in their own words, to play it. In addition, many of the field notes that the researcher made from her own observations related to the problems that learners appeared to be having in

this context. The concept of transmission implies a neatness -- along the lines of the teacher transmitting a tune which learners receive and then, depending on their ability, readily or more gradually come to play -- which simply did not exist in reality in the fiddle group. Moreover, the classical concept of transmission used in the sense of teaching and learning, and applied to learning in group situations, suggests that individuals in the group respond to information from the teacher in broadly the same way and that each arrives at the same end result in terms of what they actually learn. It does not account for the observable facts that were becoming increasingly clear to the researcher during the pilot phase -- namely that each student was behaving as an individual in relation to his or her approach to learning -- implying that the nature of human learning is inherently complex.

In summary, these early stages of finding out what took place in the ALP classes and discussions with fellow learners led to two particular insights. Firstly, that the instances of individual learning behaviour which were demonstrated by the students showed that the situation in the classes was complex, and, secondly, that "transmission" as a paradigm did not provide a sensitive enough framework to use as a basis for understanding the actions of the learners. Bringing these two points together led to a shift in the perceptions of the researcher concerning what might most profitably be the focus of investigations.

There was another set of influences which contributed to this shift, however. During the participant observation phase the researcher had been employed as a part-time tutor in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Edinburgh as part of a teaching award scheme for postgraduate students. This experience brought the researcher into contact with some of the current ideas about teaching and learning in higher education, such as the notion of the tutor being a facilitator whose role and

responsibilities were to lead the tutorial group and to help students to learn, as opposed to being a transmitter of course material or a subject “expert”. It also led to a greater awareness of what the learners were “doing”. For example, from observations that the researcher made in tutorials, it became evident that students had not always learned what they had been taught. Reflecting on these teaching experiences in the context and spirit of a reflexive approach to the study methodology also to help to redefine the direction of the research.

*Refocusing investigations: The learners*

After several months of reflection based on observations in the fiddle class, on the researcher’s accumulating experiences as a university tutor, in informal discussions and in continued perusal of the literature, the focus of the research was shifted away from the initial concern with the role of the teacher. It was now clear that to understand how people learned to play the fiddle would require looking beyond the actions of the teacher. It was also apparent that a detailed consideration of the behaviour of the learners would be a more profitable approach to illuminating how the learning of the instrument was actually achieved.

Moreover, according to the experiences from the ALP group it was increasingly being borne in on the researcher that there was a particularly significant alignment between the need to consider the process of learning, according to the findings of the literature review, and the importance of practice to the participants in the ALP group. Indeed, arising from observations and informal discussions with class colleagues in the pilot investigation, one element of the learning process stood out as being particularly important to the students themselves. This was what the learners themselves termed as the “practice” or “playing” that they did at home.



Throughout the time the researcher spent in the fiddle class, informal comments from the learners such as: “I’ve had a bad week; didn’t do much practice this week”, or “My playing’s got worse, I haven’t played the fiddle at all during the holidays” were commonplace. These comments were made in a quite casual way at the beginning of the class sessions before the teacher arrived. Further, such remarks were not directed specifically at the researcher; they were comments made by one learner to another. In fact, hardly a week went by where one or other of the students did not make some reference to their practice or playing that was undertaken outside the fiddle class itself.

Indeed, the importance of practising the fiddle at home had been emphasised by the learners right from the start of the researcher’s attendance at the fiddle classes. An informal conversation at the “Fiddler’s Arms” pub in Edinburgh, which was tape recorded, demonstrates this point. Here, some of the learners who were later involved in the core investigation, tried to account for the reasons why a number of their contemporaries had dropped out of the classes:

Ken: . . . we went from about twelve to fifteen, down to about a sort of hard core of four to five at the end in our group. And, eh we were just . . . trying to assess why people had dropped out, . . . and I think some of it was travel, some of it was sort of family commitments.

Roy: It’s common with all evening classes isn’t it?

Andy: Well that’s right, aye. . . . Especially third terms when it’s lighter nights and stuff, people have got other things to do.

Jim G.: I think it became fairly clear early on that some people hadn’t got the commitment, they just hadn’t picked up the fiddle from one week to the next, and turned up expecting to be able to play it. . . . And the rest of us that were going to stick the course were playing it every night<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Informal conversation with ALP Learners, Fiddler’s Arms pub, Edinburgh, 29/5/95.

Thus, Jim emphasised just how important it was to play the fiddle at home in order to keep up with the activities in the fiddle class.

Practice, then, appeared to be a common activity that all the learners who continued in the fiddle class undertook. It gradually became clear to the researcher that these casual comments made by learners pointed to something deeper and of fundamental importance. Underlying these remarks was the belief on the part of the learners that practice was a necessary activity in order to improve one's competency on the instrument. Indeed, the accumulating comments seemed to imply that practising the fiddle was seen by these learners as a key factor leading to skill improvement. These insights meshed well with the prominence about practice emerging from the literature -- namely that practice is an activity which is central to learning to play a musical instrument.

### *The centrality of practice*

After approximately ten months of the pilot investigation and setting the emerging perspectives acquired from these experiences against the extant literature, the researcher posited that an investigation of the practice that learners in the group undertook would help to shed greater light on the *process* of learning how to play a musical instrument. Whilst, as was noted in Chapter Two, practice has not traditionally been a focus for researchers working within the discipline of ethnomusicology, the pilot investigation clearly indicated the centrality of the activity to those in the ALP class and suggested that an exploration of practice activities would be illuminating and worthwhile. Furthermore, focusing on an activity that the practitioners themselves consider to be significant has been emphasised as a potentially very fruitful research approach. The concept of the "event perspective"

devised by Stone (1982), for instance, stresses the need to look at “events” that have conceptual validity from the point of view of the practitioners.

These accumulating perspectives from the pilot investigation provided a cohering set of frameworks to help shape the outlines of a more focused investigation -- the core investigation.

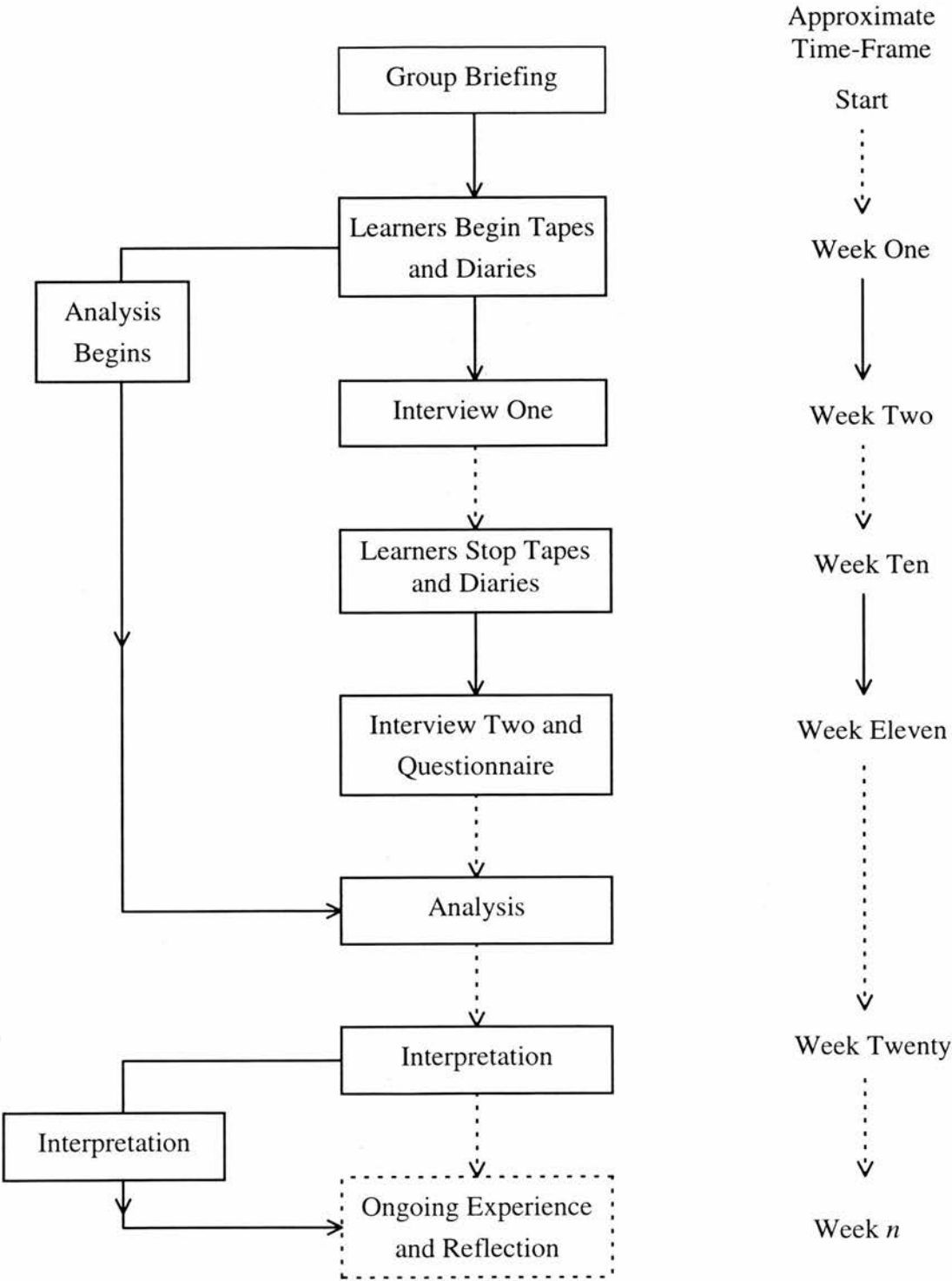
### **The core investigation**

This discussion of the core investigation is divided into three sections. The first explains the reasoning and rationale behind the core stage. The second outlines the methods of data collection and describes each individually. Lastly, the third section, describes the practicalities of actually carrying out this phase of the research. To assist readers, a summary diagram of the various steps in the core investigation appears in Figure 3.1 overleaf.

#### *Rationale behind the core investigation*

As a first step it was necessary to arrive at an agreed set of definitions of key terms so that the researcher and those participating in the study could work with a shared understanding. Critically it was important to provide a working definition of the term “practice”, given the evidence from the pilot phase which suggested that there might be variations in what each learner understood by the term (this theme is explored in greater depth in Chapter Four). The researcher decided to investigate only the *home practice activities* of the group of learners -- the *solitary* playing that the learners did at home. She did not wish to consider the group activities of learners in the fiddle classes or in sessions, and there were three reasons why the researcher decided to limit the investigation in this way. First, home practice appeared to be an activity common to everyone and hence was a *comparable* activity. Second, home

Figure 3.1: Summary diagram of the core investigation



practice appeared to be considered as the principal facet of practice by each participant. Third, the researcher felt that trying to explore in detail all the possible settings where learners might consider practice to be taking place (e.g., in the fiddle classes and in sessions) would have raised formidable data collection difficulties, and indeed would have been impractical. It was, however, hypothesised that an investigation into the home practice activities of the learners, whilst not covering all the possible situations in which practice was taking place, would give considerable insight into the process of learning.

Another aspect of the core investigation was that it aimed to obtain *detailed* information about how learners practised. Geertz describes doing this kind of ethnography as obtaining a “thick description”, and makes an analogy with violin playing:

To play the violin it is necessary to possess certain habits, skills, knowledge, and talents, to be in the mood to play, and (as the old joke goes) to have a violin. But violin playing is neither the habits, skills, knowledge, and so on, nor the mood, nor (the notion believers in “material culture” apparently embrace) the violin. (1975:12)

In other words, actions which may appear simple on the surface, such as playing the violin, are usually complex, and the role of the ethnographer is as much about interpreting and analysing an activity as it is about making observations.

As a result, a small sample was considered appropriate to make the task feasible and manageable. The researcher’s judgement was that with a sample size of more than about six, important fine-grained detail might not be captured. Moreover, it was felt that investigating a group of around six in number in the requisite detail was consistent with the prevailing time constraints. Another good reason for investigating a small number of people in a study of learning is that learning is an

individual phenomenon which cannot readily be generalised to any great degree. Nevertheless, descriptions of the learning activities of individuals may generate insights which can be applied more widely. Brookfield (1991:38), for example, talking about an account made by a student entering graduate school, which was read by other students, noted "although her account is one person's description of what was perceived as a highly idiosyncratic experience, it has embedded within it many generic elements which are recognized by successive intakes of graduate students."

The proposal to restrict the sample size to a relatively small number is also in line with accepted qualitative research practice in the humanities. Miles and Huberman note:

Qualitative researchers usually work with *small* samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth -- unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance. (1994:27)

Further, it corresponds with studies in the fields of ethnomusicology and folklore which have focused on one person (e.g. Russell, 1986; Porter and Gower, 1995) or on a limited number of people such as a family (e.g. Miller, 1981).

Six adult learners who were all members of the intermediate fiddle class at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh in the spring term of 1996 were selected for observation. This class, according to the booklet issued by ALP, was for those players "with a fairly good command of the instrument". As a result of the pilot investigation stage, the six learners were all known personally to the researcher as they had been attending the same class as the researcher for at least eight months.

Members of the sample were thus not chosen on the basis of strict criteria such as age, gender, or socio-economic status. However, it can be said the sample group was

generally speaking representative of that particular ALP fiddle class, in which there tended to be a greater number of men than women and where the majority of attendees were aged thirty and over. According to the researcher's earlier observations, attendance at the classes was sporadic and there was a high drop-out rate. Consequently, it would have been difficult to obtain a statistically valid sample even had this been desired.

The main criterion for selecting this particular sample of learners was that they had been attending fiddle classes at ALP for some time -- at least a year -- and *regularly* attended the weekly classes. It was envisaged that participation in the study would require a high level of commitment, and regular attendance at the classes was taken as an indicator that participants would be unlikely to drop out of the investigation. Thus, the sample was chosen on carefully appraised pragmatic grounds. Appendix 3 provides a summary of the biographical information for each of the core investigation participants.

The time-frame of the core investigation was originally intended to be one term of fiddle classes lasting ten weeks. In the event, however, the duration of this phase had to be extended, as the section entitled "undertaking the core investigation" details. The summer term of fiddle classes immediately following the Easter holidays in 1996 was targeted as the period when the core investigation would take place. Although there were arguments in favour of observing participants over a longer time-frame, the researcher felt that it would have been impractical to do so. The primary reason for this was that the methods of data collection which were envisaged as essential to gaining detailed information (namely the tape diary and the written diary) were likely to prove rather time-consuming for the learners. It was hypothesised, however, that



ten weeks would be sufficient to give significant insights into how individuals learned.

### *Methods of data collection*

One of the first issues that the researcher had to resolve in her wish to investigate practice was *how does one study practice objectively?* The fact that home practice is normally performed as a *solitary* activity makes it difficult for a researcher to observe. Asking participants about their practice in an interview situation is certainly one way in which information could be gathered. However, the reconstructive interview technique, although commonly used, may not always be the most appropriate method to accumulate data in the field of learning for the same two reasons explained in Chapter One in relation to retrospective studies. First, significant points of detail may elude capture because of the fallibility of human memory. Second, learners may not be all that conscious of the learning process and hence may find it difficult to describe their experiences of learning in an interview situation. In the researcher's view, the fact that few studies hitherto had focused on practice in a natural context also meant that there was no clear guidance in the literature about tried and tested approaches which could be reliably replicated.

For the purposes of the present study, then, there was a need to devise particular methods of gathering data on practice. Accordingly, two methods of data collection - the "tape diary" and the "written diary" -- were developed for this purpose.

### *The tape diary*

In simple terms, the "tape diary" -- a term coined by the present researcher -- meant that learners would be asked to make recordings of every practice session they undertook at home using a portable cassette recorder. This seemed a particularly

appropriate means of gathering data on learning as it would give an aural record of the practice which learners actually carried out; something that might not readily be amenable to verbal description. Further, it was hoped that the tape diary would give an insight into what the learners *normally* did in their practice sessions without the researcher having to be present herself.

The fact that the researcher had noted that learners frequently recorded the teacher in class on cassette tape as a way of obtaining repertoire -- some indeed recorded the entire lesson -- and commonly dictated the titles of tunes into their cassette recorders during classes, seemed to indicate that the learners were quite familiar with the idea and procedure of recording themselves. Hence, it was posited that they would find using the tape diary an extension of an already familiar activity.

In order to promote a standardised approach to ensure that the records would be broadly comparable between individuals, learners were issued with a written guidance sheet on the use of the tape diary. This had the additional merit of helping to clarify their task. A copy of this written guidance sheet appears in Appendix 4. It was stated in the guidance sheets that participants should record their practice on the tape each time they practised the fiddle at home. A practice session was defined by the researcher as *every time you play your fiddle in your normal place of practice*. If the learners played along with a cassette tape or the radio at home they were asked to record this also. Learners were asked not to stop the tape during their practice sessions except, of course, if there were any domestic interruptions. They were also asked to state on the tape whether they were using written music or playing by ear, and each time they moved from one mode to the other, as the researcher would not be able to tell from simply listening back to the tapes which mode was being used.

Further, they were asked to state on the tape the date and the time at which the practice session took place.

To help the researcher analyse the practice recorded on the tapes, those involved in the investigation were also asked to make periodic *comments* about their practice on the tape. This was termed *thinking aloud* by the researcher and involved asking the learners to describe on the tape what they were trying to accomplish at a certain time. The purpose of this was to allow the researcher to obtain an understanding of why they were doing a particular task, if indeed they were aware of a reason. Moreover, this would help to avoid the possibility that the researcher might misinterpret the data gathered on the tapes. To aid learners in this task, they were given *examples* on the guidance sheet of things that they might comment on. In giving such examples, the intention of the researcher was clearly not to prompt participants to make particular responses, but rather was to give an *indication of the kind of issues that they might address*.

Participants were also asked to record their *feelings* whilst practising and were given examples of this on the guidance sheet. For example, they were asked to state if they were enjoying playing a particular piece of music. Further, learners were asked to state if they thought they were having any particular problems. Students were encouraged to provide these various reflections and comments as little or as often as they wished, and had the option of providing them during or at the end of the practice session.

An additional reason for asking the learners to make comments about their playing on the tapes was that it would allow for the opportunity to capture the learners' *own* interpretations of the learning experiences. This type of research into learning is

known as the “second-order perspective”, and the emphasis is on how individuals see and understand the world around them. Van Rossum and Schenk write:

Traditionally research with regard to human learning is done from a first-order perspective. This means that the emphasis is on the description of different aspects of reality. In this kind of research into the learning behaviour of students the attention is basically turned to the learner and to certain aspects of his world . . . . With regard to research into human learning a new approach has developed, which is not directed so much to reality as it is, but more so to how people view it. In this type of research one tries firstly to take stock of, and secondly to systematise, the various ways in which people view or experience important aspects of the world around them. In this case one has as a starting point the perspective of the learner and not, as it is traditionally, the perspective of the researcher. (1984:73)

Inviting participants to recall and record their personal meaning of learning in the tape diaries also connects with constructivist perspectives on learning which seek to find out about how individuals interpret and view the world around them.

Samples of the type of material obtained through the use of the tape diary may be found on the accompanying compact disc. A list of the contents of the CD appears in Appendix 4.

#### The written diary

As it was hypothesised that certain participants might not feel comfortable recording their thoughts in the tape diary, and in an effort to obtain further detailed information on the learning process, participants were also asked to keep a written diary for the duration of the study. The purpose of the written diary was to collect participants’ more considered recollections upon what they had already said on the tapes, as well as to offer individuals the chance to record their thoughts in a written rather than a

spoken form. It was viewed as being complementary to the tape diary, then, and was meant to bring together what the learners had said on the tapes over the past week.

The inspiration for asking learners to keep a written diary of their learning experiences is related to the “learning journal” technique which has been documented in sources relating to adult education, for example, Candy (1991) and Brookfield (1991). Whilst written diaries have proved useful in other fields as a tool for gathering data, however, to the researcher’s knowledge they have not been greatly used in research relating to music learning. Brookfield has the following to say regarding this data gathering technique:

Learning journals are a valuable source of information about how learners experience learning, yet because of the time it takes learners to reflect on their experiences and record these in writing, this technique is rather neglected. . . . Learning journals provide an immediate and direct recounting of learners’ experiences of learning, relatively undistorted by teacher or researcher interventions. (1991:37)

This method of data collection, like the tape diaries, would give learners the chance to record their own thoughts, feelings and experiences of the learning process, and can also be regarded as being shaped by constructivist frameworks.

To assist individuals in the present investigation with the task of keeping a written diary, they were issued with guidance sheets. These asked that the learners write entries in their diaries once a week, or more frequently if they felt the urge to do so. Participants were asked to write down in as much or as little detail as they liked how they thought their practice had gone over the past week. For clarification purposes they were given some examples by the researcher of the issues that they might wish to cover. For instance, they were asked to consider whether there had been an improvement in their playing over the past week. As with the tape diary, learners

were also asked to include comments on their feelings about learning. For example, they were asked whether they had enjoyed practising during the week. A copy of the written diary guidance sheet and samples of extracts obtained from the written diaries appear in Appendix 4.

## Interviews

In addition to the tape diary and the written diary, a standard fieldwork technique from the social sciences of individual *semistructured* interviewing was used as a means of gathering data during the core investigation. Bernard writes:

. . . semistructured interviewing is based on the use of an **interview guide** [emphasis his]. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order. The interviewer still maintains discretion to follow leads . . . (1988:205)

The fact that interviews were semistructured, then, meant that although they were conducted using a list of questions which the researcher had devised, certain “leads” were also followed as appropriate. Each learner took part in two interviews during the core investigation. Learners were prompted to give their responses to questions in as much detail as possible. Broadly, the questions in interview one aimed to find out why learners were playing the fiddle, why they were attending classes and what their perceptions were of learning in the group. Subject areas discussed in interview two included styles and repertoire, participation in the study and practice. Participants were asked the same questions as each other in each interview. Additional questions relating to each individual learner were included in the second interview. These questions were asked specifically to clarify themes that had emerged from the tape diaries.

Both of the interviews were tape recorded and later fully transcribed. The first interviews took place soon after the learners had commenced using the tape diary and

written diary and the second interviews were held when the learners had ceased using the two. The second interview was a particularly important phase of the investigation as it sought, among other things, information relating to each learner's participation in the study in order to assess the accuracy of information the researcher had obtained. Questions from interviews one and two (excluding the specific questions asked of individuals at the end of the second interview) are detailed in Appendix 5.

#### The questionnaire

Following the second interview, participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire in order to obtain biographical details such as age, marital status, occupation and qualifications. The information obtained from the questionnaire is summarised in Appendix 3.

#### *Undertaking the core investigation*

Prior to the commencement of the core investigation, permission to undertake the study had to be sought from the Scots Music Organising Group Committee at the ALP. The researcher wrote a letter to the committee to ask for their permission to conduct a study involving some of the learners in the intermediate class. This letter was subsequently discussed at a committee meeting and the project approved. A copy of the letter appears in Appendix 6.

The next step was to approach those learners selected for investigation and ask them to take part in the study. As stated earlier, the six people who were selected had all been members of the intermediate class at the ALP in the spring term of 1996 and consequently already knew the researcher.



Consistent with the relationship of trust and friendship that the researcher had built up with the learners during the pilot phase, individuals were first of all approached informally and asked whether they would be willing to take part in the core investigation. All those invited to participate said they would be happy to co-operate. To formalise the agreement, letters were sent out to these learners during the Easter holiday prior to the beginning of the summer term. This letter included further information about the study and contained a tear-off slip which participants were asked to sign and return to the researcher. A copy of the letter appears in Appendix 6.

Although all these learners agreed in writing to consider taking part in the study, several practical problems later emerged which affected the operation of the core investigation. One difficulty was that a planned merger between the intermediate standard class and another class of similar standard did not in fact go ahead. As a consequence of this, one learner, Roy, ended up being in a different class from the other participants during the core investigation.

A further problem which arose was that two learners, Jim M. and Alison, who had both planned to attend fiddle classes that term, were prevented from doing so due to other factors. Jim M. was heavily involved with study for an Open University course and felt unable to attend classes because of a lack of time. In addition, another factor which made Jim M. less likely to attend the fiddle classes during this period was the number of local and national Monday holidays that affected the Adult Learning Project. These holidays meant that there would in fact be fewer classes that term than usual. Likewise, Alison felt that attending classes would be impractical for her because she was going to be travelling a lot that term. Despite these practical problems, however, the researcher felt it acceptable to include these individuals and

continue with the study, as both maintained 1) that they were happy to be involved, and 2) that they would still be learning the fiddle at home.

A group briefing was felt to be the most appropriate way in which to formally begin the core investigation and to introduce the study in more detail to the learners. Indeed, the group briefing was viewed as a key event in the methodology of the core phase. The purpose of this briefing session was to clarify what learners would be asked to do during the core phase as well as to give them a chance to ask questions and raise any concerns relating to the study. Using this approach would ensure that each learner was given the same orientation and instructions and also meant that the researcher would not have to communicate the same information repeatedly to each. To further simplify the study-tasks which the learners were asked to undertake, the guidance sheets on the use of the tape diary and written diary were issued at this time. The specific aims of the group briefing were to introduce the following:

- aims of the study
- methods of data collection
- guidance sheets/other relevant materials
- a chance for further questions/clarification

The group briefing took place during the break in the first fiddle class of the term. The two learners who were not present at this class were briefed individually at a later date with the same information as the rest of the group. At the briefings, mutually convenient times for the first interviews were arranged. Participants were also issued with a pack containing seven blank cassette tapes, each of ninety-minute duration, to use for the purposes of the tape diary and a small soft-covered note book to use for the written diary. At the group briefing the researcher requested that tapes

be handed in at the fiddle classes to try to ensure that complete records of practice were regularly updated. Further, prior to handing out any tapes the researcher had taken the precaution of labelling each tape with the name of the learner to whom it belonged and a number, for example, "Andy, Tape 1". This simple labelling procedure subsequently greatly assisted the researcher in the analysis of material.

The researcher also checked at the group briefing that each person had a working tape recorder of reasonable sound quality with which to record their practice. Two learners asserted at that point that the sound quality of their recording equipment was not of a high standard. Consequently, one learner agreed to borrow a tape recorder from his brother and the other was given a tape recorder on loan from the researcher. Participants were asked to commence recording their practice as soon as they undertook their next practice session following the group briefing.

Although prior to undertaking the core investigation the researcher had been concerned that the tape diary and the written diary might prove somewhat problematic for participants to use and might mean providing a lot of support to learners, the reality was in fact relatively unproblematic. Indeed, the learners' involvement in the study quickly appeared to become something of a routine. Each week at the fiddle classes, learners would hand in the tapes they had completed to the researcher and fresh tapes were given out as required. Learners who were using recording devices that ran on batteries also received fresh batteries from the researcher at the same time as obtaining new cassettes.

Furthermore, although the learners undertook the recording of their practice with due seriousness, the researcher was reassured that the participants appeared to be relatively relaxed about taping their practice for the purposes of the study, possibly

because they knew the researcher in the capacity of a friend. This resulted in making the data-collection stage of the study a good deal easier than had been initially anticipated.

After six weeks of the study had elapsed and a number of tapes of the learners' practice had been acquired, the researcher became concerned that the study might be placing too many demands on their time. The learners were thus given the option of stopping their taping of practice at that point. However, all the participants said they were happy to continue with the taping. Some said that due to a lack of time they had not managed to do much practice over the previous six weeks, and one learner said that he appreciated that it might be necessary to keep going with the taping for the purposes of research. Overall, though, the learners appeared to have got used to participating in the study after six weeks and were quite willing to keep going with the study tasks. Towards the end of term they gradually ceased their use of the tape diary and written diary one by one as they felt appropriate, and as agreed with the researcher.

After each learner had stopped taping for the purposes of the tape diary, the second interviews took place. At this point, participants were asked to hand in their written diaries and any remaining tape diary cassettes on which they had commenced recording. In addition, they were asked to fill in the short questionnaire which sought to find out biographical data.

Although the time-frame of the study was originally limited to one term, in reality the duration of the study had to be kept fairly open as a result of pragmatic factors. As it turned out, one participant in the study, Alison, was unable to devote much time to learning the fiddle during the study period due to work commitments and travel.

Alison, therefore, recorded the majority of her practice during the summer holidays of 1996. This was felt to be acceptable by the researcher as it was considered important that learners did not practice *specifically* for the study but instead recorded the practice they would *normally* have undertaken.

### *Analysis and interpretation*

Having received data in the form of the taped interviews, tape diaries, written diaries and questionnaires, the next stage was to begin formal analysis of the material. Simultaneously with data collection taking place, however, informal analysis of material was already being undertaken. The researcher had begun transcribing both the material from the first interview and the spoken portions of the tape diaries. This was undertaken specifically in order to frame the questions to be asked in the second interview. Following the second interview, all interview material and spoken comments from the tape diaries were transcribed. In total, 34 cassette tapes were obtained from the tape diary method, amounting to approximately 51 hours of recorded data. Interestingly, there were variations in how many tapes each learner handed back to the researcher. Whereas one learner had completed ten cassettes, another had used only two. The other learners, however, handed back around five cassette tapes each. During the analysis phase, data from the interviews, tape diaries and written diaries were brought together under subject headings using a card index system. Material gathered from the short questionnaire was summarised in table form.

### *Ongoing experience and reflection*

Several other research opportunities presented themselves during the core investigation itself and for a period of approximately one year afterwards. Consistent with the reflexive approach that the researcher had adopted in the methodology for

the fieldwork, these experiences have also been taken into consideration in this study as they further helped to shape research perspectives. Firstly, as a result of one teacher being absent on two consecutive weeks from ALP, the researcher was invited to lead two sessions of a beginner level class there<sup>6</sup>. Following this, three adult learners asked the researcher to give them fiddle lessons on a private basis. The researcher agreed to do so and these lessons continued for a number of months. Informal and unstructured conversations, which focused on issues that had arisen in the light of some of the findings of the pilot and core phases, were also held with several tutors at ALP.

These supplementary investigations tied in with the period during which analysis and interpretation was taking place and gave the researcher the opportunity to take a slightly different research perspective on the theme of adult learning (from the viewpoint of teaching fiddle to adults), as well as to pick up a few final contextual reflections. Hence, throughout this stage the researcher was thinking through and “interpreting” some of the findings from the core investigation proper. Relevant data from this phase have been brought into the Chapter Six which considers the implications arising from the study.

### **Summary of Chapter Three**

This chapter has described how the fieldwork component of this study was carried out in two distinct stages -- a pilot investigation, and a core investigation. The one-year pilot investigation in which the researcher joined a fiddle class as a participant observer led the researcher to conclude that there was a need to move away from examining the teacher’s behaviour to considering the learners more closely. The core investigation which followed took place during approximately one term of the fiddle

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<sup>6</sup> At no time, however, did the researcher teach any of the six learners who took part in the core investigation.

class. Its primary aim was to find out more about the process of learning through exploring the practice that individuals did on the fiddle at home.

The sample selected for investigation during the core phase consisted of six adult learners attending an intermediate standard fiddle class at ALP, Edinburgh. A multi-step procedure consisting of the tape diary, the written diary, semistructured interviews which were tape recorded, and a questionnaire, was employed for collecting data. Data collection concluded with a phase in which the researcher 1) taught the fiddle to a small number adults herself and 2) talked informally to other traditional music teachers. The results from the core investigation are presented and explored in Chapters Four and Five.



## CHAPTER FOUR: THE LEARNERS

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the results of the core investigation based on material gathered from the interviews in which the learners took part. The first part of this chapter introduces the participants who were involved in the core investigation so that the practice profiles presented of each learner in the next chapter can be better interpreted and understood. At the conclusion of the chapter, individuals' experiences of using the tape diary and the written diary are considered in order to assess the validity of the material obtained from using these two methods.

### **An introduction to participants**

#### *Musical background and motivation for learning the fiddle*

At this stage it will be helpful to properly introduce those who took part in the core investigation phase and to sketch some information about each. The information given on learners in this section is in addition to the summary chart of biographical information presented in Appendix 3. The names of those involved in the core investigation were: Alison, Roy, Andy, Jim G., Jim M. and Ken. These individuals had all been learning the fiddle at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh for over one year. Although some of them already played another musical instrument, *all had begun learning to play the fiddle as adults*. However, their previous experiences of music and reasons for learning the fiddle were quite diverse.

#### **Alison**

Alison had been playing the fiddle for two and a half years. She could also play the piano and guitar to some degree of competency, but had not played these regularly for around twenty years. Her parents did not play any musical instruments. Alison

had been attending fiddle classes at ALP for one year, but had also received individual violin lessons prior to this whilst living in England. She described her reasons for attending fiddle classes at the Adult Learning Project:

Well, it's [ALP] got a very good reputation as being the place to go if you're interested in learning traditional music. And, em, it's quite cheap, you're . . . in classes with people who have a similar interest, and it's a good way, you know, to have a fairly social time while you're doing something like that; and . . . it has a kind of social scene attached to it that's quite interesting.

Thus the minimal cost of attending classes and the sociable nature of the group were factors which influenced her attendance at the group.

Alison underlined why it was that she began learning the fiddle or violin, indicating that playing the instrument gave her back a feeling of self-confidence after a period of illness:

I think more and more . . . for me it became a real symbol of starting to do things that were more of a creative nature, and so . . . learning the violin's been important. . . . When I was ill . . . I decided to start and learn, and it . . . gave me an awful lot of confidence. . . . It was very demanding at first. I could only play for about two minutes at a time and then my arms would get so exhausted and everything because I was very unfit and run-down, and it gave me a goal. I could see myself getting better. . . . I'd been very ill for quite a few years and I'd lost an awful lot of confidence, so taking up an instrument then was great from that point of view. It gave me a lot more back.

Roy

Roy had been learning to play the fiddle for three years and four months. He also played the guitar and had done so for around seventeen years. His sister also played the fiddle a little. He received no formal tuition on the guitar, and started off learning the fiddle informally in this way too before beginning lessons at ALP. Roy had been

learning at ALP for just over one year but had attended another evening class where the fiddle was taught for around two terms prior to this. He described the reasons he had for wanting to be able to play the fiddle, some of which were connected with the fact that he could already play the guitar:

. . . I like the sound of the fiddle and I like what you can do with the fiddle . . . A lot of it's probably got to do with the fact that I can play the guitar already, so I'm a bit sort of confident I can do something and I see that as being a bit of a challenge.

Taking up the fiddle as a challenge was also something to which Alison alluded.

Ken

Ken did not play any other musical instruments apart from the fiddle. He had been learning for two years and nine months and began originally at ALP. His parents did not play any musical instruments, but, for Ken, being brought up in the highlands of Scotland was one factor which contributed to his wish to learn to play the fiddle:

I've always promised myself . . . over many years that at some stage I would have a go at playing some instrument, em, and had not really thought in any great depth about getting round to doing it until in my late thirties when I thought I better get on and do it now before time ran out. Em, and it was to, I guess, try something in an area that -- coming from a scientific background -- that was artistic, em, rather than very factual. . . . I guess that's what it was, was to try something that I had no experience of . . . , and coming from a Gaelic background I felt I wanted to do.

He continued:

. . . I also find it's something that I do for myself, it's something for me, rather than much of everything else that I do, I do for other people or in the company of other people. . . . I can go and play the fiddle on my own, I can practise on my own, eh, it's, em, something self-indulgent to me . . .

Learning the fiddle for Ken, then, also gave him a feeling of self-fulfilment. He outlined his reasons for joining the fiddle classes at ALP, which seemed to happen quite by chance, as follows:

At the time I started to think about learning, the two options were to take private lessons or go to the evening class type of learning situation, and the galvanising factor was quite simply an advertisement which said these classes are available for adult learners, and I felt much more comfortable going to classes with other adult learners rather than one-on-one with perhaps a rather puritanical violin teacher.

Andy

Andy had been learning to play the fiddle for four years. Throughout this time he had been attending classes at ALP. He did not play any other musical instruments and no-one else in his family played the fiddle. It was partially due to the fact that Andy liked traditional music that he was inspired to take up the instrument:

Well, I've always been interested in traditional music. . . . I've always liked it. And I thought, as I was getting older and no doing nothing, I thought I'll need to have a hobby of some kind and I thought I'll take up something, . . . so I thought of the fiddle and that's what I've ended up doing.

Jim M.

Whereas Andy made a conscious decision to learn the fiddle, Jim M. ended up learning to play the fiddle quite by accident. He had been playing the instrument for around four years, and all three of his children played the fiddle. He described the circumstances which caused him to begin learning:

It just kindve happened accidentally, because my oldest daughter was starting to learn to play the violin at school and the teacher, em, said she'd like the parents to become quite heavily involved and she asked me if I would mind doing that. . . . So it wasn't something that I decided to

do, you know. It kinda happened accidentally because of that, . . . and was just an opportunity I didn't expect to have.

The primary reason why Jim M. started learning the fiddle, then, was as a consequence of being asked to help his daughter who was learning to play the violin using the well-known Suzuki method (Campbell, 1991:285). This method commonly demands some degree of parental involvement. Jim M. played other musical instruments in addition to the fiddle. These included the trumpet, which he played during his school-days, the whistle and piano. It seems that, like Ken, seeing an advertisement for the Adult Learning Project provided the impetus for him to attend classes there:

I saw a leaflet in the Music Library . . . and read that they were, you know, trying to get adults involved in learning kindve traditional Scottish music and song and dance and things like that. And it sounded just the thing, so I thought I'd give that a try.

Jim G.

Unlike the other participants, Jim G. had a background of fiddle playing in his family for his father played this instrument. Jim G. described his reasons for learning the fiddle:

I suppose there's just so many small reasons. I mean, I think the thing is, I've been playing musical instruments for most of my life and my Mum and Dad both play, and both my sisters have played piano, sort of at one time or another. So it's just been – I've never really had to think why.

Indeed, Jim G. could remember live music being played at the family home in the evenings by his parents and several of his neighbours as a child.

Jim G. had been learning the fiddle at ALP for about three years, but began attempts at playing the instrument, without the aid of a teacher, some years before this.

Interestingly, this coincided with a period when he was living in England and felt a yearning to return to Scotland. Jim G. also played the guitar and one of his children was learning to play the recorder and the piano. It was as a result of living in close proximity to one location where ALP classes took place, and coming across the organisation socially in the area through hearing ALP learners playing in local pub sessions, that Jim G. found out about the fiddle classes run by the organisation.

Taking this particular group of learners together then, one sees that four (Jim M., Alison, Roy and Jim G.) already played another instrument, or instruments, to some level of competency prior to taking up the fiddle whereas two (Andy and Ken) did not. Two of the learners (Andy and Ken) had been attending classes at ALP since their very first attempts at playing the fiddle and three (Andy, Ken and Jim G.) progressed from the beginners' class at ALP through to the intermediate class. As we have seen, the reasons the learners had for attending lessons at ALP were quite diverse, but for some the specific catalyst to begin came simply by chance through seeing an advertisement for the organisation, for example. The motivations these adults had for learning the fiddle were also diverse, but learning the fiddle was seen variously as a hobby and a challenge, and in some cases was stimulated by a family background in the instrument or a personal interest in traditional music.

#### *Learning in a group situation*

Whatever the reasons the participants in this study may have had for joining fiddle classes, it is interesting to note that many considered learning the fiddle in a group situation to be particularly helpful to them as learners. One reason for this was that there was a sense of camaraderie between class members. Jim G. highlighted the benefits he felt came from learning in the group:

. . . I'm a fairly sociable animal, so I suppose I like being with other people and sharing the -- I think you share the enthusiasm and the motivation feeds off. You know, if you sort of think: "Oh, God, he's doing really well, I'm gonna"; I think you do get that, there's no doubt about that. Eh, you get a plus from the others learning as well. And also, I think . . . if you went to a tutor every week you wouldn't have any support from anyone else, you know, so you -- I could imagine that you might not have done your homework . . .[and] you might get a finger wagging . . . and you'd be very cowed and it wouldn't be very pleasant and you might just drop out of it. Whereas, in the class situation, you can sit at the back and coast along for a week . . . if you know that you have been naughty and that you haven't played your fiddle that week very much, you know.

He went into further detail about the positive traits of the group learning environment:

So the class is the thing to do, and you meet interesting people, and I would say, . . . going on from first year and going on to second year, it's noticeable that loads of us that have sort of stayed the course, there's become a bit of a bond between us. So you sort of think, yeah, of course I'll be back, see you after the summer. Whereas if you were on your own, it might be just too easy to put it off . . .

From these extracts we can identify several reasons why Jim G. liked learning in a group situation. In this type of learning there was an avoidance of a one-to-one situation with a teacher. In addition, Jim G. gained motivation from his colleagues in the group. Learning in a group situation was useful to Jim G. not only from a motivational point of view, however, but because of the support learners offered to each other:

KC: . . . do you find it helpful learning the fiddle in a group situation?

Jim G.: I think yes, I do. There's no doubt about it. . . . You can discuss it [the tune] afterwards . . . if you haven't quite got it, and share the music . . . , and of course if you miss a class, as well, you usually find that someone's taped it for you or photocopied the music for you, and that's all very good; very useful.



Two other learners, Roy and Andy, also mentioned that they found learning in a group situation helped their motivation for learning the fiddle. Andy, for example, said he liked learning in such a situation

. . . because it makes you want to practise, I think, so you're not letting other people down as well in the class. I mean, I don't think there's any point in learning for two hours and then coming back the following week and never practising in between, because it's just wasting your time and everybody else's.

For Andy, then, the class provided an impetus to practise the fiddle at home. Ken mentioned the sense of camaraderie he felt that learning in the class brought, and maintained if you were "feeling down", the other members of the class "can pick you up". Roy felt that one positive aspect of learning in a group situation was that it was a good deal cheaper than learning in a one-to-one environment. In addition, he stated:

. . . I don't think in an individual situation you can really take in everything that you're getting given, so, you know, it's . . . just as effective going to a class situation. But, I mean, motivation and the whole sort of spirit of it and lots of people with a common aim makes a big difference for me.

Alison, however, although acknowledging the friendliness of the other learners and social nature of the fiddle class said that "I actually feel I learn much more individually. Much more. I come on much better if I'm just practising or having a one-to-one lesson." In addition, Alison mentioned that she considered feedback from a teacher to be very important when learning a new skill. Due to the size of the class, however, this was simply not something that there was a great deal of opportunity for.

Jim M. highlighted the problems he had experienced in learning the fiddle in a group context:

. . . I felt . . . at first that just in terms of actually getting familiar with tunes, in terms of learning a lot of tunes and getting a kindve repertoire it's [the class was] really good . . . Covering twenty-five, or thirty, or fifty tunes in the first year or something was great. But I think now that, . . . because the class is geared toward just covering ground in terms of tunes rather than addressing any -- seriously addressing any kindve technical difficulties that people might be having, I sometimes feel that I might be getting stuck. Because for me to get much further I would need to have somebody helping me with that side of playing, you know.

Although learning in a group situation offered the chance to learn new repertoire, then, Jim M. felt that it did not allow much scope for individual assistance from the teacher, especially in terms of learning technique. He went on to say that one-to-one lessons (although he had no experience of learning the fiddle in such a situation) might be useful to him for that reason.

Generally, then, amongst individuals, there were differing perceptions about learning to play the fiddle in a group situation. Whilst it was agreed that group-learning classes did offer the social aspect of learning together, some participants felt that the lack of individual attention from the teacher and the lack of concentration on the techniques of playing the fiddle were negative elements which arose from learning in a group situation. Interestingly, though, others found the lack of attention from the teacher to be beneficial in that they avoided the possible tensions inherent in learning in a one-to-one situation.

### *Traditional music*

In addition to playing traditional music on the fiddle, some of the six involved in the study actively pursued an interest in traditional music through purchasing recordings,

listening to radio broadcasts and attending live music performances. Indeed, in some cases they had done so for a number of years. Jim M. described his introduction to the “folk scene”:

I suppose the first time I listened to any traditional music or folk music . . . was with bands like Fairport Convention and the Steel Axe Band, those kindve bands in the Seventies. . . . I . . . started to buy records . . . and, I suppose, inevitably get interested in more bands and get to know more people and go along to see them.

Ken talked about listening to traditional music on radio:

. . . the old favourite of the Scottish dance music at half past six on a Saturday night has always been probably the background of my listening to Scots music. Going right back to the Sixties and ever since I was young enough to remember, that was always something that was on; as would be Gaelic programmes which are usually later in the evening, when my father was alive, and to this day. Scottish dance music is something that I listen to regularly as with folk programmes -- Archie Fisher, those kind of programmes. In the afternoon, Iain Anderson on the car radio . . . as I'm driving round . . .

Unlike Ken, Jim G. did not often listen to traditional music on the radio, but possessed a large collection of recorded music of this genre. He maintained that he normally listened to what he called the “big names”, such as the fiddle player Alasdair Fraser, a few times a week.

What emerges from these various statements is that although learning the fiddle may be recent for these adult learners, their engagement with traditional music may go back a good deal longer. Jim M. made this point when he said: “I’ve just come fairly recently [to the fiddle] in terms of well, life. I’ve learned to play the fiddle fairly recently but I’ve been listening to this kind of music well . . . for years, and years, and years; decades.” Indeed, it may well be that, as a result of hearing the

fiddle and traditional music played in sessions, at live concerts and on recordings, these adult learners have been inspired to take up an instrument in order to become active performers as opposed to passive listeners. It also seems likely that some of these learners may already have been familiar with how certain pieces in the Scots fiddle repertoire sounded prior to attending classes.

There was another reason why traditional music was popular amongst these six adult learners, however. As one put it, traditional music was “readily performable”, in the sense that, compared to other forms of music, such as classical music, where a reasonably high level of competency was normally required to play in public in a group, learners felt that one did need not be a particularly competent player to perform traditional music. Indeed, learners felt that it was possible for them to play in sessions without being “expert” performers.

Further, when participants were asked if they would like to play other genres of music, such as classical music or jazz, it was interesting that most said that they would. However, some qualified this by questioning their own ability to do so. Ken was one example:

KC: . . . would you be interested in playing another type of music, say classical music, or are you mainly interested in just traditional?

Ken: No, eh, if I ever became competent enough to play other types of music then I would like to look at other types of music, yes.

KC: You don't think you're competent enough at the moment?

Ken: No, . . . nowhere near competent enough.

KC: Why not?

Ken: Em, . . . from a technical point of view, a lack of timing, a lack of interpretation of the music, a lack of -- emphasis. Technically I can play the notes right most of the time, but I can't play them consistently right

and I can't bring out the subtleties of the music. And I think that's an area that I, I and others, need to work on. . . . I can disguise my inadequacies in a session, but I can't disguise them in any solo situation.

Although Roy was also interested in playing classical music, he felt that there was more "discipline" involved in this than in playing traditional music, and hence classical music was rather off-putting from his point of view as a learner. From these various viewpoints, then, it can be hypothesised that the relative ease of playing traditional music compared to other forms of music was one reason why these adults were learning to play Scots fiddle and not classical or jazz violin, for instance.

### *Styles of fiddle playing*

The question of what is meant by "style" in the context of fiddle playing is a complex one. Within the genre of traditional music, style is most commonly associated with the idea that the tune itself and the way of playing that tune are separate. For example, nuances such as ornamentation, double stopping, ways of bowing, variants of the tune, the tempo of the tune, and indeed any departures from the "basic" tune itself, might all be considered as contributing to a particular style of playing. In the culture of Scots fiddle music, too, there are often assumed to be *regional* styles of fiddle playing, relating to areas such as Shetland, the West Highlands and the North East. Further, musicians within the tradition often relate a particular style of playing specifically to an *individual* musician. For instance, it is common to hear one fiddler describe another's playing as being "in the style of Scott Skinner". As Ó Canainn observes:

Style in music may be concerned with performance or composition. It can mean either the manner of performance peculiar to an individual musician or, alternatively, those common features of performance which distinguish the majority of performers from a particular area. (1993:40)

But what did the question of “style” mean to the group of adult fiddle learners involved in this study, and what bearing did it have on their own fiddle playing?

Interestingly, most of the six were aware of the fact that there are considered to be different regional styles of fiddle playing in Scotland. They also knew of the existence of styles outside Scotland, for example, the “Cape Breton” fiddle style from Canada. The fact that learners had some knowledge of styles might be attributed to the fact that they had seen or read books or articles on the subject, listened to recordings of different styles of fiddle playing, or more likely had seen workshops and classes advertised that offered tuition in a particular style.

However, when asked more specifically about regional styles of fiddle playing, several maintained that they felt they would have difficulty in recognising one style from another. Alison, for example, said:

I don't think I understand enough about it yet, you know. I've heard the different styles and I quite like the Cape Breton one, I must say, but it's only now I'm beginning to really understand the differences – it's still quite new to me. . . . There's fiddlers . . . I think are very proficient . . . you know, Aly Bain or people like that, but I think I look upon it just now still as almost different style players rather than seeing that there are underlying styles.

Alison's comments also relate to the fact that to her the concept of style was not just limited to one particular geographical area; she was also aware of the possibility of there being different style players. Jim M. also had problems in differentiating between regional styles, and felt it might be necessary to be an accomplished player oneself to be able to do so, adding:

Em, I'm not sure that I can always distinguish very well between them. . . . my ear's not that kindve tuned into it that I can always, you know, make the distinction very clearly.

Ken, however, felt that the West Highland style and the Shetland style of playing had a particular appeal for him as a result of growing up in the highlands of Scotland. This suggests the possibility that individuals may favour particular regional styles because of their social identity rather than their musical discernment.

Moreover, although participants generally said that they themselves were not conscious of playing in a particular style, some indicated that it was one aspect of their playing that they would like to concentrate on in the future. However, several felt that they would need to become more competent players before they were able to do so. Jim G., for example, said that his present aim was to be able to play the notes and not “screech”, and Alison maintained: “I’m just concentrating on trying to play [laughs]. . . . But yeah, I mean, I think style’s very important . . .”

These responses are particularly interesting as they contrast with accounts of how styles were learned in the early twentieth century in Scotland. Researchers (e.g. Cooke, 1986) have shown that styles of playing were usually “acquired” rather than consciously learned. Further, traditional fiddlers did not normally make a distinction between the “playing of the fiddle” and the “style of playing”. It is also unlikely that they would have associated being able to play in a particular style with a high level of playing competency. Nowadays, however, there is more of an awareness of the existence of styles of fiddle playing based on ornamentation and bowing, for example. Indeed, the above findings suggest that people’s perceptions of style have changed, as well as their ways of playing in a style.

Nevertheless, although participants in this study felt that they themselves were unable to play “in a particular style”, the addition of ornamentation to tunes, something which is often associated with a certain style, such as grace notes and slides was



valued. Adding ornamentation to the tune was viewed variously as making a particular tune sound better to listen to and more interesting to play. Roy said putting in ornamentation was important “so it sounds like a good fiddler playing.” He also maintained that adding ornamentation to the tune made it more satisfying to play because of the added element of complexity. Alison said about ornamentation: “I think that’s what makes it really. I think without it, it [the music] sounds a little bit dead . . . ” Indeed, according to the results of the tape diary, Alison and Roy stood out as being the two learners who added the greatest amount of ornamentation to tunes. Examples of their playing may be found on the accompanying compact disc (see also Appendix 4 ii. for a list of the contents of the CD).

Interestingly too, certain individuals mentioned that ornamentation was added once the basic tune itself had been learned. Andy, for example, said:

. . . when I’ve learned the tune and I’m quite confident with the tune – no playing it very well but I know the tune, I’ll put in like wee grace notes or slides that I think might fit in . . . But I do make a wee conscious effort . . . for to try and, eh, make the tune bigger.

Ken went about adding ornamentation to a tune in a similar way. He described the difficulties he faced in this context which were related to the content of the fiddle lessons:

. . . I feel that what I would like to now do is to stop learning endlessly more tunes and go back and learn a repertoire of fifty tunes which I’m sure I could do quite easily and play them better with embellishment, with grace notes. Em, I personally find it very difficult to put any embellishment on a tune that I’m just learning whereas if it’s something that I know relatively well . . . I’m relaxed enough about playing the tune that I can then think about doing more than that . . .

Thus, for these two learners, ornamentation was added at a fairly definite point in the process of learning a tune.

In addition, all of the study participants mentioned that they did not always employ the ornamentation the teacher suggested. Rather, they added it into their own playing where they felt it to be appropriate. They thus varied to some extent from the teacher as well as from one another in their renditions of tunes. The fact that they did not always take the teacher's advice indicates that they were to some extent "self-directed" in the learning process.

### *Learning difficulties*

Most of the six involved in the study mentioned that the path to gaining competency in their fiddle playing had not been an entirely smooth one. This is hardly surprising given that learning a new skill of any complexity presents challenges, especially for the adult learner. Broadly, the fact that these participants had faced difficulties as learners indicates that they viewed their fiddle playing as being more than a hobby and were quite serious about improving their skills. Interestingly, too, some of the difficulties that learners faced were perceived by them to be linked to the way in which the fiddle was taught in class.

Ken described his feelings about his fiddle playing. It seemed that he was more concerned with the *quality* of his playing rather than the *quantity* of tunes that he could play:

I guess I kindve feel that, . . . having got to a certain level, which is basically the level we're at, . . . we're stuck in a bit of a rut at the moment of learning new tunes. And I think that now that I know about forty tunes that I can play, you know, I can scratch my way through them, is that at this point instead of learning another forty new tunes I need to be working harder on the forty that I've already got to bring out the

subtleties of the music. . . . I'd rather play a limited number of tunes well and with feeling, and with expression, rather than playing eighty tunes with the limited feeling and expression that I play them with at the moment.

Indeed, a particular problem for Ken had been the number of tunes taught in a particular fiddle class:

Previously, I think, if I felt there was something that caused difficulty it was . . . in the teaching of a number of tunes in one session . . . One really had to work very hard to get those tunes learned in some way before the next week, so that one didn't learn new tunes very well and didn't get time to practise the old tunes.

Like Ken, Jim M. mentioned that he too had problems coping with the volume of tunes being taught in a session, and felt that often there simply was not time to learn repertoire satisfactorily. Again, he highlighted the need for more information on playing style and technique:

. . . that's one thing that the classes were doing, I suppose, just kindve adding tunes to your repertoire, although . . . I think . . . maybe what I felt I could have benefited from more is some actual help with actual playing style rather than just accumulating tunes.

Jim G. mentioned that he had experienced problems in learning tunes by ear in the fiddle class due to fatigue:

I think I've found difficulty sometimes . . . if you've had a particularly tiring day at work . . . and if you do two hours [in the fiddle class] . . . learning tunes by ear, like with no music. I must say I'm very comfortable with music . . . If it's learning by ear and we've learned a whole first tune by ear up to eight o'clock, and then we start off on another one by ear as well, and then we go back to the first one, I find that my concentration has gone because I'm just wiped out. And I've seen that in other people, as well, talking to them after the class, and they've been wiped out during the day at work and you're just sitting there and you just can't take in any more. . . . that's a bit demoralising.

You feel that no matter how hard you want to concentrate, . . . you can't .

. .

This statement suggests that learning in an evening class situation may not actually be the most effective time to learn for certain adult learners as a result of the work commitments and other pressures that some may have experienced earlier on in the day.

Yet, despite the problems that individuals had experienced in learning the fiddle, few had seriously considered giving up, although at times learning could be very frustrating:

KC: Have you ever considered giving up the instrument?

Roy: Em, every day probably, [laughs], but every time I play it -- well, just for a few, ten seconds, you know, in the tune. . . . This . . . is the sort of peak of frustration, you know, but it would never last more than a second or so . . .

Roy went on to explain that the reason for his fleeting notions of giving up playing the fiddle was "frustration at not learning as fast as I would like to". He believed that others learning in the class had also experienced similar feelings. Andy described how he had momentarily considered giving up the instrument when he first began learning it:

Ah, I think in the early days . . . it was maybe just in the back of my mind, thinking if I . . . dinna get a grip of this I'm gonna just, like, give in. Because when I first started . . . the class I was in everybody could read music, everybody. I think there was one person that couldnae apart from me . . . and we were always getting tunes written down and so they know what they're looking at and so they're going to get the thing . . . And I was really slow, in fact for most of the class I would just sit in the class and hardly play a note, but I would tape it.

Likewise, Ken had experienced particular concerns in the early stages of learning the fiddle:

I think I've felt throughout my learning that I've always been at the back of the class or the bottom of the class. Certainly, in my first year especially, I felt I was really having to hang on to the coat-tails of everybody else. But on the basis of once you stop coming [to the classes] then you're never going to catch up, then even if you run along at the end, or if you're one lap behind the race, then you're still in the race. But if you stop you're no longer in it.

The above comments show a good deal of determination and intrinsic motivation on the part of the learners to become competent fiddle players. Despite the fact that Andy and Ken mentioned having difficulty in keeping up with what was taught in the classes when they first began, they still continued with lessons because they believed that if they dropped out, they would never catch up. From Andy and Ken's descriptions, however, for them, attending the fiddle lessons, especially in the early stages, appeared to be connected more with surviving the class experience than with learning explicitly.

It seems though, that where participants had considered giving up playing the fiddle it was around the time they first began learning the instrument. Following this period, for most the learning process seemed to become easier, although it could still be highly frustrating at times. Roy's comment about not being able to "learn fast enough" is again perhaps typical of the difficulties faced by the group as a whole. There appeared to be a general feeling amongst these adult learners that they had limited time in which to achieve competency in their fiddle playing. Participants wished to be able to play the instrument as quickly as possible and became disheartened if they felt that they had made insufficient progress within a certain time-span. Indeed, one particular feeling that emerged from the interviews was that some of the learners wished that they had learnt the instrument as a child. Andy, for example, said "because I'm learning as an adult, . . . when I'm playing I'm concentrating on playing and I want to improve to make up for lost years."

### *Goals in learning to play the fiddle*

The motivations participants had for learning the fiddle have already been examined, but thus far little comment has been made on the eventual outcomes they hoped to achieve. It appeared that the primary goal in learning to play the fiddle for most was a social one -- that of being able to play the fiddle with others and for other people to listen to. As well as the social goal, however, learners also had personal aspirations which included, for example, being more comfortable and at ease with their own playing.

Ken described his goal in playing the fiddle as simply being confident enough to play the fiddle in the company of others without becoming embarrassed. Jim G. wished to play the fiddle for friends and with his neighbour who is musical, and also to be more confident about his playing on the instrument. Alison, too, desired to be able to play the fiddle with other people and to have the ability to play harmonies as well as the melody on the instrument. This aspiration was linked particularly to her experience of sessions, where the music had tended to be rather melodically based:

... an awful lot of traditional music when you go to the sort of sessions at our kindve level ... is that everybody's just playing the same tune on different instruments, in the same key and everything. Same notes at the same time. ...

In addition, almost all the study participants talked about reaching a certain "standard" of playing competency which was higher than their present level. Jim M. said that his goal was to be able to play at a standard at which "you can be entertaining". Andy, although expressing the desire to be able to play the fiddle for other people, indicated that it was important for his playing to be of a level which was good enough for other people to listen to, adding, "I suppose there's a bit of ego comes intae it, isn't there." Although Roy did not have an ultimate goal in learning the fiddle, he felt that he would like to be:

. . . good enough to, you know, go somewhere like . . . a pub or something and be able to play . . . fiddle on its own . . . and to have people who are more familiar with fiddle music, rather than just your average person, actually not think it's bad, not think: "Oh, that's terrible". That's, I suppose, a sort of realistic goal which I'm quite confident I'll achieve, . . . but, eh, I don't think I'm going to achieve anything more than that, but that's perfectly fine for me.

Again, Roy's comment was typical of statements given by study participants. These learners were all somewhat modest about their abilities and ambitions as fiddle players, and generally, too, believed that their playing was not of a high standard. Consequently, most of them did not envisage themselves playing in a solo capacity to an audience, but instead viewed their eventual role as being a participant in a larger group setting where music-making was undertaken, such as a session. Indeed, participating in sessions appeared to be particularly attractive for these learners. One reason for this may be that sessions, like the fiddle classes, presented the chance to socialise and to play music together in a group situation. Another is that sessions offered the security of playing in a group situation. Participants, then, were not only learning to play the fiddle for their own solitary amusement; playing music with other people was also an important goal. Indeed, it appeared that, for many of these learners, group performance, in the context of playing in sessions, for example, was one of the expected aims of group learning.

### **Perceptions of the teacher**

During the first interview, the six learners were asked questions relating to how they viewed the teacher. These included whether they thought a teacher made a difference to them as learners as well as the qualities they felt a good teacher possessed.

Overall it was agreed that a particular teacher could make a substantial difference to their learning. Broadly, there were two ways in which students reported being affected by a teacher. First, to some a teacher was viewed as making a direct



technical impact upon their learning. Second, to others a teacher was viewed as more of a "motivator". The researcher has chosen not to reveal the identities of the teachers in this section, and instead has referred to them as X, Y and Z.

Jim M. described the qualities he felt were inherent in a good fiddle teacher. For Jim, this had more to do with personal communication skills than the teacher's ability to play the fiddle:

I think -- just some people, you know, in a kinda way that's difficult to describe -- that some people communicate with you more effectively than others . . . , it's difficult to put your finger on exactly what it is. So, you know, you kindve tune into their personal style or . . . how they present themselves a bit more effectively than with other people. Eh, I mean, I think it's got more to do with that than their technical ability.

Others stated that a teacher should offer motivation and be able to exert discipline in the classroom situation. Jim G. related his experiences of two different teachers:

I think . . . [X] who I got in the first year . . . was great because she was a great motivator and she also showed a really keen interest in what you were doing, you know. I think . . . other people might find her overbearing perhaps, but I thought she was really great, very strong and I didn't realise what an art it is to be -- if you're going to do two hours' tutoring you've actually got to be a strong person and take the lead of the class and actually not be afraid to exert discipline . . . and . . . exert enthusiasm as well . . .

. . . One of the other guys I had [Y], I thought was a bit -- he was too quiet, too introverted: "Right, let's play this tune. All follow me." And you would sit there, and once it had finished you'd look about thinking . . . it didn't have a . . . bit of "oomph" about it.

It is somewhat surprising that this student mentioned the ability to take control of the class as being a trait that he sought in a teacher. One might expect the opposite to be

true in the sense that an adult learner, being an adult and not a child, can discipline his or her own learning.

The teacher was also particularly important to Roy in terms of motivation. He commented that although the other learners in the class can offer a lot of motivation, the teacher “. . . has got to be the strongest motivator”. Alison also maintained that the type of teacher she received could make a huge difference to her learning. She related her experiences of two different fiddle teachers:

. . . the teacher we have now [Y], . . . he's OK, but . . . I don't feel inspired by it at all. The teaching, just sitting and playing tunes -- I find the tunes, although they're OK, they don't touch me in any kind of way. . . I like things that I find inspire me, or interest me, that I feel . . . have a bit of depth to them. . . And sitting sight-reading, which is what we're doing there, I do it, but it's OK, I mean it's serving a purpose 'cause it's increasing my knowledge of tunes. But . . . I would go to those lessons out of duty rather than, oh good. Whereas with . . . [Z] I'd be really looking forward to going, because to me he was -- he'd such a feel for music and he had such a feel for the way people played. He was quite idiosyncratic, plus we were learning by ear, plus he was giving us more tips on style.

As well as the differing personalities of these two teachers, then, the methods that each used to teach the fiddle were also considered important by Alison. Whereas one teacher taught tunes using the written music, the other taught by ear. The ways in which individuals in this study preferred to learn tunes, whether by ear or by using written music, is discussed at some length in the next chapter.

Interestingly, though, none of the study participants mentioned that the standard of the teacher's playing was of great importance to them, although a certain level of competence in playing the fiddle seemed to be expected. Indeed, it seemed that the personality of the teacher or the “ability to teach” was of greater importance. Ken outlined what made a good teacher for him:

. . . it's not just a question of musical competence, there's all the ancillary factors . . . . I think the, em, subtlety of teaching [is] in finding different ways to explain a technique or how to get around a problem, or how to bring out an emphasis in the music rather than saying, eh, only in one way. So finding someone who can explain in different ways, or use different analogies, eh, is very useful . . .

The implication here is that good teaching is about responding actively to the needs of the learners.

Andy took a rather different view about the importance of the teacher, however. He maintained that the teacher made little difference to him as a learner because "every teacher can teach you something." In addition, he indicated that because of the general level of the fiddle playing amongst the learners in class, the teacher did not matter because "we're just learning tunes at our level."

According to participants' responses then, a "good teacher" was someone who could motivate and inspire the learners. The standard of the teacher's playing was not viewed as being a significant factor in their ability to teach. Instead, the teacher's personality and the ability to explain things in different ways was viewed as being important. As Jim M. put it, the learners were looking for someone to "show them the way" in a quite pragmatic and explicit sense. Returning to the critique of the concept of transmission found in Chapter Two, we can now see that rather than viewing the teacher as a rather distant figure who was responsible primarily for the passing on of repertoire, the learners in this investigation viewed their ideal teacher as someone who could motivate and inspire, as well as being someone who would take a close interest in their students and be attentive to their individual and detailed needs.

## Practice

Whilst it was generally agreed amongst the six learners that the teacher of the class could have an effect on their learning, especially in terms of motivation, it was clear that the teacher was only one factor contributing to their development. Indeed, the practice that learners did was viewed by all of them to be very important to developing their competence.

### *The importance of practice*

During the first interview, each of the learners was asked to describe how important they thought it was to practise the fiddle. Their responses demonstrated that, without exception, practising was seen as fundamental. Indeed, participants often became quite animated in describing their feelings about the importance of practice. Alison, for example, felt that practising the fiddle was “essential, utterly essential”. Andy maintained that practice was “the be all and end all” in terms of learning the fiddle, and added “I’ve got to practise if I want to improve.” Jim M. took a similar view, as did Jim G. who asserted:

It’s fundamental, . . . you don’t get anywhere without practising. I mean, I think that’s the thing. Practise, practise, practise; and if you don’t practise, there’s no -- you can’t pretend you’re getting anywhere, you’ve really got to drive yourself to practise if you want to improve at all.

Roy also underlined the importance of practice by saying that it was “everything”. Furthermore, he felt that even if one had not received instruction from a teacher, one could still learn to play the instrument by practising. Ken made an analogy between the importance of practising the fiddle in order to improve and the necessity of training in the sport of running:

Oh, I’m sure it’s like everything else in life, . . . if you want to get good at something you’ve got to put in the time and you’ve got to, em, put in the practice. And I go back to the days when I started running. I was never

much of a runner, but by diligently training I became reasonably good . . . If you haven't got talent or the intrinsic ability that's already very manifest, then I think the only chance you've got is to work very hard at it . . . Whether you have a lot of ability or only a little ability, your ability will be better if you practise.

Practising, in Ken's case, then, was also viewed as a means of making up for a perceived lack of natural ability.

The value that the participants attached to this practice activity came across many times in response to other questions in the interviews. Further, the fact that learners considered it important to practise the fiddle not only to improve their own playing but also simply to keep up with the progress of the rest of the class was affirmed by Jim G. He recalled the situation in the beginners' class which he attended:

I think there were some people initially who were in the class, especially in the first year, who'd come and do a lesson and then come back the following Monday having not touched their fiddles . . . I don't know if they expected to improve or even be able to play, you know. This was realising that you had to do, almost every night at that stage, play a bit if you really wanted to improve.

One reason why the learners involved in this study considered practising the fiddle to be so fundamental to gaining competency on the instrument may be linked to their previous educational achievements. All the participants in this study had undergone some form of further education and thus were used to putting commitment and effort into their studies in order to achieve success. It seems likely that they were bringing these prior experiences to bear on their fiddle learning.

### *Descriptions of practice*

In order to find out a little more about what the learners considered to be practice in the home setting, each was asked to describe what "to practise" meant to them in this

context. Whilst practice was considered to lead to an *improvement* in playing skills by all six learners, as we have already seen, some of them mentioned that practice also fulfilled the function of *simply maintaining the skills* that they had already acquired on the instrument. For instance, talking about what practice meant to him, Jim M. said:

. . . at the moment it's really about preservation [laughs] or conservation of whatever level of ability's there, you know, rather than kindve let it dwindle away. Because you certainly notice the difference if you haven't . . . played for three days . . . or more than that, I mean, well, I'm aware of the difference. . . . So practice for me in the last few months . . . has meant just really trying to maintain a level of playing that I'll be able to kindve improve upon, you know, at some time in the future.

According to the above statement, then, it appeared that practice could actually perform different functions dependent on which particular stage Jim was at, being both a skills maintenance activity as well as a means to improving.

In addition to the role of practice in conserving his existing abilities, Ken maintained that, for him, practising the fiddle was connected both with keeping up with the activities in the fiddle class and refining playing skills, which gives it a social purpose:

I guess there are two components to it. First of all, "to practise" is to try and, em, maintain contact with what the class is doing. And so practice often doesn't mean as it were, a repetition or a refinement, it means hanging on to what tunes are being taught in the class this week and which will be played next week.

The fact that practice had this social purpose is interesting as it shows that certain participants were influenced by the others in the class in terms of their practice sessions. This influence was primarily on the *amount* of practice that each undertook. For instance, Ken, as we have already seen, maintained that when he

began learning the fiddle he was conscious that unless he practised very hard he would get left behind the rest of the class. In addition, however, the group experience had an effect on the *manner* of practice that some adopted, as Chapter Five will detail.

Jim G. also inferred that practice could have different functions for him at certain times. He talked about one type of practice that he undertook:

. . . sometimes I just go and play for a short time, just play tunes I know quite well, just take the fiddle down and stretch my fingers. That sort of practising, done nothing new technically and not changed the way I've played.

Practising to Andy meant both *learning a tune and then refining it*. He explained:

Mm, "to practise", I think that's probably two-fold . . . Initially, practice means at the moment learning the tune and once I've got that -- usually got a tune or a couple of tunes within a week, a week and a half, a few weeks, like from memory whole -- then after that it would be maybe looking at my bow and watching what it's doing and maybe try and play two notes up the way and one back, or put slides in or wee "hurrums" [a type of ornamentation], or wee grace notes

To Alison, practice was associated with *improving playing skills*:

Em, I think practice means playing something so that you can feel that your rendition of it has improved, you know, and feeling generally -- trying to increase your skills on the instrument, whether it's through playing scales or bowing techniques or tunes or playing the tunes over and over and over again so that they really sound more natural, all of these things, I think. So it's basically trying to sound good or better.

In summary then, although all the learners viewed the practice they did as a means to improving their playing, several indicated that practice also helped to maintain their current level of ability. Practice also had a social function inasmuch as learners



practised in order to keep up with the other members of the fiddle class. Furthermore, it was also the case that practice had varying purposes at different times to the learners and indeed fulfilled different purposes.

### *Definitions of practice*

It has already been noted in the literature review in Chapter Two that the term “practice” has often been poorly defined by researchers working within ethnomusicology and other fields. Additionally, what *learners* of musical instruments themselves consider to be practice seldom appears to have been considered in much detail. In the present study a working definition for practice -- that of “home practice” -- was derived in order to provide a rigorous focus for data collection and to avoid confusion arising from the fact that each learner might include a variety of activities under the term.

During the second interview, however, participants were asked a wider range of questions in order to gain a more rounded picture of what practice in the context of playing the fiddle actually meant to them. Although the focus of this study was on the learning activities carried out by each of them independently under home practice, they were also asked whether they would view their playing in the fiddle classes or in a pub session as practice. The responses to these questions proved to be varied.

Roy, for example, considered his playing in the fiddle class and in pub sessions to be practice, as he viewed all the playing he did on the fiddle as contributing to an improvement in his competency. He mentioned, however, that he did not like to use the term “practice” but instead preferred to call it “playing”: “Practice is a sort of dirty word for me. I don’t like to think I’m practising . . . It’s not a word I ever use to

refer to my fiddle playing; I would just say 'playing'." The reason for this appeared to be that Roy believed the term "practice" had connotations of discipline and of playing tunes out of necessity rather than enjoyment. By contrast, however, Andy did not consider either playing in the fiddle class or playing in a pub session as practice.

Jim M. explained why he regarded the playing he undertook in the fiddle class and an element of playing in pub sessions as practice:

. . . because, you know, you're getting the opportunity to play certain tunes that you've learned to a certain standard and hope to try and play them better. But also to get the opportunity to play them in company, you know, with other people, with other fiddlers, which is not the sort of thing I get at home. Yeah, I see that as being practice . . .

He went on to equate practising with the rehearsal of a skill:

I suppose . . . every time you pick the fiddle up and play a tune, an element of it is kindve practice, it's rehearsing a skill I suppose -- practising a skill that you've acquired or learnt to a certain extent before. . . . I suppose it is practice inevitably because you're practising a skill, but practice wouldn't be the function of it.

Alison also viewed playing in the fiddle classes as practice, but did not consider playing in sessions to be so. Ken, however, felt that the activities in the fiddle classes were not practice because of the circumstances and location in which the learning took place -- you were being taught by a tutor and in a different location from your home. However, he did consider playing in pub sessions as practice because, in this situation, familiar tunes were played and might be refined. Jim G. saw his activities in the fiddle class as being quite different from the practice he did at home. In addition, he did not consider playing in a pub session as practice as he viewed this as being a platform for performance. To Jim G., practice was most definitely a solitary activity. He stated: "I practise things by myself".

Whilst the term “practice” was given a specific definition for the purposes of the study, and indeed it was home practice that was at the focus of the present investigation, we can see, in fact, that to the learners involved in this study it had various meanings. As well as being used by them to describe the activities they undertook at home on the fiddle, it could also denote, for some, playing in sessions and playing in the fiddle class. This shows that the present investigation has only addressed one part of what was considered to be practice by some of the learners. It also highlights the importance of the need for researchers who are managing similar field investigations to adequately define the study tasks and terms for participants.

### *Responses to practice sessions*

The importance that learners attached to the practice they conducted on the fiddle has already been noted in this chapter. It appeared, however, that even though there were certain times when some learners were not necessarily enjoying their practice sessions they would still continue to practise in an effort to improve their playing. Andy was one such learner. However, he indicated that such a practice session would generally be of a shorter duration than normal:

Andy: . . . when I’m no enjoying it, I’ll no play for nearly as long as what I would as when I’m enjoying it, but it just becomes too hard sometimes. I don’t know why, it just seems like anything you try and do, it just doesnae want to come . . .

KC: But why do you practise even though you’re not enjoying it sometimes?

Andy: Because I want to become a competent player, I really want to become competent . . . I want to become a good player, I do. But how long it’s going to take me, I don’t know, practice-wise.

Ken stated that the times when he did not enjoy practising were: “when I’m basically practising tunes that I feel obligated to practice to stay in contact with the class, or

tunes that I don't particularly like." He described what would happen if he was not in the mood to practise:

Well, . . . I'd do a little, and if anything at that point I would revert to playing tunes that I like and that I know, so I would try and make the time even if I didn't feel like practising . . . I would do something, eh, even if it's only ten minutes and I would probably . . . balance my time more towards old favourite tunes rather than toward new tunes to make the time more rewarding for myself.

Jim M., however, maintained that he normally enjoyed his practice sessions. Likewise, Jim G. normally did because it was time that he could spend on his own. He felt, however, that practice could be particularly frustrating if he had not played well. Alison also generally enjoyed her practice sessions, with some exceptions. She highlighted the difficulties which she felt were inherent in learning any new skill:

I think I get quite a deep satisfaction out of it really, but I do -- I am aware that when you're learning something like this, when you're learning anything really that's fairly complex like, you know, the fiddle, or music, or computer, or anything, em, you go through phases where things seem to move on really quite well and you're just feeling that you're getting slightly incrementally better and then you just hit a patch where it sounds . . . [bad] . . .

I think it's just as often like this idea of the darkest light before dawn. Things almost feel as though they dip before they come; before they make a bigger improvement, you know, things don't always -- you're level of skill doesn't necessary increase incrementally, it goes leaps and bursts often and plateaux. And I think probably if you've been going along a plateau and you feel a bit sick of it, then you can lose heart; but you know you just have to keep on practising.

Roy, however, was the only learner out of the six who indicated that if he was not enjoying the practice session he would stop. He said that he would never "force" himself to practise. With the exception of Roy then, it seemed that the learners would generally continue to practise even at times when they were not enjoying this

activity, in order to try and improve their playing. This again indicates the level of commitment they had to becoming more competent fiddle players.

### *Repertoire*

All of the participants in the core investigation mentioned a connection between the tunes they liked and those they would practise. Indeed, it was generally the case that if participants did not like a particular tune, they simply would not spend time practising it.

Alison, for one, indicated that there was a strong relationship between tunes she liked and those she practised, and maintained that she only worked on the tunes that she enjoys. Ken felt the same way. He remarked: "time is too short to practise tunes that I don't like, except if I feel I have to stay with the class. The ones that I didn't like I would let go". Jim M. said that if he did not like a particular tune he would not try and play it, and Jim G., Andy and Roy gave a similar response. These statements indicate that the amount of time participants spent learning a tune was often dependent on how much they liked a particular tune. It also shows that these learners were selective about which tunes they learned -- they did not learn tunes simply because they had been introduced in the fiddle class.

However, what it was that made a particular tune popular with individuals is more difficult to explain. Roy indicated that there were several factors that attracted him to a fiddle tune:

Em, probably the first is the ease of playing. How easy they are to play at a reasonable speed, how impressive they sound. . . that's the first thing. The second thing, not quite as important but fairly important, melodies. Generally, the melody of a strong tune.

Some of his favourite tunes included “Soldier’s Joy” and the “Merry Blacksmith”. Both these, he felt were easy to play, had a good tune, and could be played fairly fast. Like Roy, a “good tune” for Ken was one which was relatively simple to play. However, it was also linked to whether or not he felt a tune could be danced to:

KC: What is it, do you think, that attracts you to some tunes and not to others?

Ken: [laughs] I think if they’re easy to play. I think, em, in fact if they’re tunes I would envisage as easy to dance to. I think that’s probably why I like something like “Father John Macmillan of Barra” which I can certainly identify as a Highland Scottishe or a Canadian Barn Dance.

The point that how easy or difficult a tune was to play could have an influence on a learner’s perceptions of it, was reinforced by Jim M. He recalled an instance in the fiddle class:

... there was a tune called “Calliope House” that somebody tried to teach us and we all struggled with it. And I think that sort of influenced our perception of the tune because I think most people thought, well, you know, that’s one I’m going to write off. I’ll leave that.

The reasons why “Calliope House” was perceived as particularly difficult was most probably because it was in the key of E major, a relatively uncommon key for fiddle tunes, which contained patterns of fingering that the students had generally not encountered before. Further, the tune was meant to be played fairly fast and involved a good deal of string crossing.

Andy described the kind of tune that he liked: “I suppose, em, initially easy playing, or if it’s a tune that you always know where its going, like it’s [the melody is] going to go up, and you’re always going to come back again and go up again.” One of the combinations of tunes that Andy especially liked playing was “Father John

Macmillan of Barra” followed by the “Atholl Highlanders”. Like Andy, Jim G. alluded to the melody of a tune, and particularly the melodic progression of a piece, as being factors which influenced whether or not he liked it:

... there is the tunefulness ... , that is, a good going tune’s got some sort of melodic progression in it that you sort of go along with, you know, that sort of resolves itself nicely somehow which starts in the melody. Like the “Barrowburn Reel’s” quite nice in the way it starts and then it, especially in the second part, it begins to go up and up and up and then back ... something like that that’s got a bit of variation in it ... I mean they’re obviously just dance tunes but they’re very melodic and I like that with some strathspeys, like “Miss Lyall” is quite good.

“Morrison’s Jig” and “Drowsy Maggie” were two of Jim G.’s other preferred tunes. It is also interesting that he, like Ken, associated the playing of the fiddle with dance.

Factors which variously influenced whether participants liked a particular piece, then, included the ease of playing the tune, the melodic progression of the tune and whether or not the tune could be danced to. As well as having particular tunes that they were drawn towards, however, certain *genres* of Scots fiddle repertoire, e.g., marches, reels or slow airs also proved popular amongst participants. Roy, for example, favoured reels and jigs which, he felt, were simple to play at speed and hence more satisfying. Although he liked strathspeys, he believed that these were more difficult to play.

Alison’s favourite type of tune was the slow air. She described why she especially liked this genre: “It’s sort of more emotional music. I think some of them are really beautiful. Some of these highland ones are just gorgeous.” For Andy, marches were the tunes he preferred. He said: “I play marches pretty well, so I like marches ... I like slow airs but I think you’ve got to be a really good player to play them or to give them justice anyway.”



Jim M. also said that he found strathspeys difficult to play. Likewise, Ken found that they could be problematic. Ken described his preferred genre of tune:

Em, . . . I would say it's been pipe marches, em, really because of the regularity of the rhythm, . . . They have a very predictable pattern which I find makes them very easy to memorise . . . Strathspeys I'm not a great fan of. Em, and that's, probably as much as anything, is that they're technically more difficult.

Strathspeys were viewed by several learners, then, as being more difficult to play than other genres of Scots fiddle tunes. This may be due to the rhythmical properties of the strathspey and the need for a special kind of bowing technique to create the desired rhythmic effect. From the statements presented in this section, then, we can see that, broadly speaking, learners preferred genres of tune that, to them, were simple rather than complex to play.

### **Participation in the core investigation**

Chapter Three of this thesis drew attention to the range of methods of data collection that were employed in the core investigation. These included the “tape diary” and the “written diary” which were developed by the present researcher specifically in order to obtain detailed information on the learning process. In order to try and assess the reliability of the material obtained from these different approaches (data from both are reported in Chapter Five), participants were asked questions during the second interview to find out their reactions to using these techniques. Their responses are now presented.

#### *The tape diary*

To recap, the purpose of the tape diary was to record the practice sessions that the learners normally did in their homes. Learners were also asked to make *comments* about their playing on the tapes to assist the researcher, which included expressing

their feelings during the learning process as well as describing what they were trying to achieve at a particular point. The general finding that emerged from their responses about using the tape diary was that most felt initially nervous about taping their practice. However, this feeling generally disappeared as they became more familiar with the procedure. In addition, few found difficulty with making comments about their practice on the tape.

Jim M., Jim G. and Roy all said that they felt a degree of nervousness when they first began using the tapes. Jim G. said:

... yeah, I suppose I was kindve self-conscious doing that. Suddenly you were – it's always to me just been done as a solitary thing, then suddenly, whoops, there's somebody listening [laughs], and that's always different.

This quote highlights the difficulties that are inherent in attempting to study an activity which is normally performed as a solitary one. Roy indicated that although his feelings of nervousness did lessen as the study went on, they never completely vanished. Andy was one exception to this pattern, however. He found little difficulty in either taping his practice or making comments on the tape. Making comments, for him, was simply a case of "speaking aloud" what was going through his mind at the time, and he maintained that he was never conscious of the fact that the tape was there.

Despite the nervousness that most felt about taping their practice, learners agreed on the whole that making spoken comments on the tape was straightforward. Ken explained:

I didn't find making the comments difficult at all, em, but they were very unstructured ... just saying what you feel at the time, so I didn't find any problem with that at all. I think it probably was easier to make those

comments because we knew you personally as a member of the class, and if we'd been doing it to someone who was more remote and anonymous . . . I would have found it more difficult because I wouldn't know that they would have been listening to the tape with such a degree of sympathy.

Alison also mentioned that she did not mind taping her practice or making comments because she felt as though she was talking to the researcher whom she had known personally for some time as a member of the fiddle class. Indeed, a number of the examples on the compact disc illustrate the fact that learners often directed their comments to the researcher in a personal way (e.g. by using her first name). It seemed, then, that knowing the researcher prior to the core investigation was an important factor in the success of the tape diary for several of the learners. Possibly, too, the *length of time* that they had known her was significant here as, over the course of a year prior to the core investigation, a relationship of friendship and trust had been established.

As it was possible that the participants might collude with each other regarding their participation in the study and that this might influence the data that was obtained, learners were asked in the second interview if they had discussed their involvement in the core investigation with other members of the class. This produced some interesting responses. It appeared that where the learners had discussed this matter (although they did not often do so), the conversation centred around their *feelings* about recording their practice, rather than *what* they were actually recording on the tapes. Ken described the type of discussion that took place between some of the class members:

I think actually once we'd started taping . . . we all felt a bit apprehensive, eh, and a bit nervous about it. I think that . . . the overriding thing that came forward is that we didn't find it troublesome but perhaps felt a degree of guilt that we weren't providing you with as much material as we might. On the other hand, it had to be representative of what we did, so I don't think our amount of practice changed to do that. But I think

the overriding common feeling we had was a degree of apprehension and nervousness about it and I think we were all surprised by that. Em, I think it's been possibly maybe in practice at home, members of our family may hear us and they have not listened to us in any critical sense and here is someone who is musical who is able -- albeit not listening to us with the view of being critical -- but has the ability of assessing us critically.

It seems, then, that one reason why learners may have felt nervous about keeping the tape diary was because they were afraid that their playing was going to be critically evaluated. Naturally, it was not the intention of the researcher to provide such an evaluation. Further, this point had been explained to the learners prior to the core investigation.

The use of the tape diary did, however, produce some rather negative effects among some of the learners. For example, several of them listened to the practice they had recorded on the tape diaries and became somewhat disheartened with the results. The reason for this was that the material recorded on the tapes did not sound quite as they had expected. Andy said:

My impressions were that I thought I wasnae a bad player for three years, but I've realised that I'm not [laughs]. After listening to the play-backs . . . I wasnae impressed with my playing at all. I really thought I was better than that, . . . actually.

He elaborated further on an even bleaker note, saying that listening to his playing on the tapes made him question the progress he had made in three years:

. . . Oh God, is this three years' work? Is this as good as it gets after three years? It's three years of a lot of practising . . . When do I become smooth? If I could get rid of the screeching I'd be fine, but it's just too scrapey and screechy and I just dunno when that's going to come. I keep asking better players but they canna gie me a right answer . . . It was sair [sore] on the ear, it was; it was sair on the ear.

Ken also described listening to his playing on the tapes as “demoralising”. The feelings that Andy and Ken related about their playing perhaps demonstrates that few people like reflecting about themselves and their performances in their role as learners. In addition, having the opportunity of hearing themselves on tape, as others heard them, may have made participants feel naturally self-conscious, just as one feels when one listens back to one’s own speech. Likewise, it may have made them more aware of any “mistakes”.

Being part of the study also prompted Ken to look toward the future. He talked about how much longer he would possibly continue to learn the instrument:

I have to say I’m taking another sort of two years. Em, I’ll look at the amount of time I’ll take to do this and there’s other things that, yeah, I would perhaps like to do by way of evening study or whatever. And I really have to look at it and say, well, if in one or two years time, I really feel that I’m not reaching a -- degree of competence that I’m happy with, then I’d rather commit myself to doing something else.

When I started out on this, it was really to say, well, I’ve always set myself the objective sometime of trying to play a musical instrument. And if I say, well, I’ve taken five years and given it what time I could in that time, where I’ve not reached the standard that I really feel I can really progress from, then I could quite easily go and say, OK. I would still keep the fiddle and have a tune from time to time, but really in terms of having an evening class one night a week, then there’s other evening classes that I would like to do . . . I would say that I really have reached a point just now where I say to myself, well, let’s hang on there for a couple of years and see what happens as I get, . . . begin to get more time again.

Although most of the learners felt a little uneasy recording their practice to begin with, they agreed that what was recorded on the tapes was representative of their usual practice sessions, with the following exceptions. Alison mentioned that when she was feeling a little “half-hearted” she did not particularly want to record her practice. Further, she felt obliged to do more of a “proper” practice for the purposes

of the study, rather than just picking up the instrument and playing it for several minutes. Jim M. felt that taping his practice took away a little from the normal spontaneity: “. . . it was quite often a bit of a fag to get the tape machine out and to get the tape, and to get the tape in the right place, and that sort of took away some of the response in the end of the day.”

Roy indicated that he might play a little bit longer than he normally would have in a practice session in order to finish off a side of a cassette tape. Also, if the tape ran out at the end of a side and he wanted to continue his practice session for a little while longer, he would normally not have made the extra effort to load a new tape. Roy, however, actually said that during the core investigation he made a “conscious effort” to do what he normally did in his home practice sessions. Jim G. also felt that what he had recorded on the tapes was representative of his home practice. However, he noted that, as a result of having to record his practice, there was probably less “messaging about”, and that he was less likely to tackle a new tune “which might sound awful”.

Bringing these comments together, it seems reasonable to conclude that despite these minor variations made to routines, what was recorded using the tape diary *was*, generally speaking, typical of the type of practice that learners normally undertook at home.

### *The written diary*

To recap, the written diary was intended to be used in addition to the tape diary to give participants the chance to record their thoughts in a written rather than a spoken form. The purpose of the written diary was also to give learners the chance to summarise or further reflect upon what they had said on the tapes. Generally

speaking, the written diary proved to be a less successful method of collecting data than the tape diary. On the whole, learners found it more difficult to maintain than the tape diary and two out of the six learners involved in the study did not return a written diary to the researcher.

Several learners, particularly Roy, felt that what they had recorded in the written diary was simply a repeat of what they had already said verbally in the tape diary. Ken also found keeping the written diary quite difficult and maintained that he was "not a diarist". Andy, however, had little trouble in using the written diary. He stated: "Well, what I've written down, it's no an affae [awful] lot, but it's just what I was thinking at the time, and the diary, keeping the diary was fine." Further, Jim M. reported that the written diary, like the tape diary, caused him to reflect and also to become a little dissatisfied with how little time he was able to spend on his fiddle playing.

Jim G., however, did not hand back his written diary. He gave two reasons for this: 1) he felt that he had already made sufficient comment on the tape, and 2) he did not have a great deal of time to devote to his fiddle playing during that particular term:

I sort of thought, you know, maybe just with the fiddling and what I'd said on that you would get enough. I don't know if there was much to add from what I would say about that. I'd say I felt over the course of the term, because of the other things I was doing, it felt like my fiddle practice was sort of taking second -- you know -- a back-seat which it hadn't done quite as much as before . . . I didn't feel that it was quite as much fiddle playing as I should have done . . .

However, whilst several learners apologised for not handing back the written diary or for writing very little, the material that was contained in the diaries was useful from the point of view of the researcher. In particular, the written diaries were helpful in



allowing the researcher to find out how learners felt about their playing in general. Examples of comments of this type include: “Had a good week, seemed to pick up the two new tunes quite quickly”; “Not a good week of practice. Labouring without written music and tired”; and “Enjoying playing when I can but always aware of other competing requirements for time.” As with the tape diaries, these comments tended to be quite analytical. And, one participant, Roy, who made fewer comments than the others in the tape diary, wrote a greater amount than his colleagues in the written diary. Illustrations of extracts from the written diaries may be found in Appendix 4.

In conclusion, then, although the learners did not write a great deal in their written diaries -- perhaps only enough to cover a few sides of paper -- what they did write was viewed by the researcher as being significant. This information helped tie together what learners had said in the tape diaries. The most likely reason why learners found the tape diary easier to use than its written counterpart, however, was because the former was more spontaneous in comparison. In itself, this points up the validity of the tape diary method.

#### **Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter has introduced the six adult learners who were involved in the core investigation. It has considered their previous musical experiences, their views about learning in a group situation, their perceptions of the teacher, and the goals they hoped to achieve in learning the fiddle. Further, it has examined the motivations that students had for learning the fiddle and attending classes. The reasons participants had for wishing to learn the fiddle varied, but for some learning the instrument represented a hobby, a challenge or an ambition. In addition, for one participant, learning the fiddle came about quite by chance rather than being a preconceived idea.

The motivations students had for joining the fiddle classes at the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh also varied, but several alluded to the modest cost of classes and the possibility of learning in a group situation as being factors which influenced them to attend.

The theme of practice has also been a significant one in this chapter. All the participants indicated that practice was an important activity to them. It appeared that practice was undertaken for differing purposes and served as a means of both 1) *maintaining* one's current level of ability and 2) *improving* one's playing skills. Practice also had a social function as learners practised the fiddle to "keep up" with other members in the fiddle class. Further, there were varying perceptions about what practice actually was, highlighting the problems inherent in defining the term.

Lastly, the learners' responses to participating in the core investigation were discussed, and especially their perceptions of the tape diary and the written diary. Participants generally agreed that what they recorded on the tapes (apart from making comments) was typical of the activities they normally undertook in their home practice sessions. In addition, they found, on the whole, that making comments about their own playing on the tapes was straightforward. The written diary, however, was considered by most to be more difficult to maintain than the tape diary. Data obtained from both these methods are reported in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE LEARNING PROCESS

This chapter considers the second part of the results from the core investigation. Data reported here are drawn particularly from the material that was obtained from the tape diary and the written diary. The practice that each of the six did at home is examined, and a practice profile of each learner is presented. At the end of the chapter, these profiles are brought together and reflected upon, and relevant themes arising are analysed, interpreted and discussed.

### **Andy's practice sessions**

The duration of the practice sessions that Andy conducted on the fiddle at home tended to vary quite a lot:

. . . I can sit for two, two and a half hours sometimes when I'm really on flow . . . and time'll pass like that; . . . other times it's just maybe twenty minutes.

Andy explained that the length of time he devoted to practising the fiddle was dictated to some extent by work commitments. Indeed, he mentioned that he would practise the fiddle most days when he was not working. Andy tended to do most of his fiddle practice in the evenings during the week and did not normally practise at weekends. He described how he normally began a practice session:

When I first begin playing I'll play tunes that I can play just to get my fingers, I think, loosened . . . I'll do that for -- it could be half an hour sometimes, like, doing that. Other times just maybe five or ten minutes, it all depends. I always start with tunes that I can play . . . just to get my fingers well oiled or whatever . . .

Practice sessions for Andy, then, normally began with a warm-up which could vary in its length. The warm-up consisted of tunes with which he was already quite familiar and its purpose was to help him attain flexibility in his bow arm and in the

fingers of his left hand. His reasons for ending a practice session included tiredness or the session not going well. An entry that Andy made in the written diary on 23 May 1996 showed an example of a practice session which did not go according to plan:

[I] Was hoping to play a bit longer but got fed up because I thought I was playing badly. I sometimes try to play through the bad periods, but tonight I got fed up. I think it stems from trying to play a bit that I find difficult in "Drummond Castle". I keep trying but my fingers just don't want to co-ordinate with the bow. I'll keep playing away though, but at the moment it feels like I'll never get it smooth.

Andy's comment above about the problems of co-ordination demonstrates that he had the ability to analyse some of the difficulties he encountered in learning the fiddle.

Another reason that would cause Andy to discontinue a practice session was having something else to do. An example of this appeared in a comment he made in the tape diary: "It's 5:25 at night and I'll be playing for about fifteen minutes 'cause, well, I'm going out."

#### *Use of a tape recorder*

Andy invariably brought along a portable cassette recorder along to the lesson at ALP in order to record material. This is something which is encouraged by the organisation, as I noted in Chapter One. Andy used his tape recorder to record the entire two hour lesson (excluding the break), which included both the tunes and the spoken dialogue elicited by the teacher as well as the group's joint attempts at trying out a new tune. It appeared, however, that changes had taken place in the ways in which he actually used these recordings at home. This points to the fact that Andy's

use of the tape recorder has been refined to suit his changing needs as a learner. He described how he used it when he first began learning the fiddle:

My first, let's say, eighteen months, I would take it home and I would record the tune about four or five times just on one tape. And I've still got to do that actually, at the start, I think, just so I could hear the tune being played over and over again.

It seems, then, that what Andy did in the early stages of learning the fiddle, and indeed still persists with to some extent, was to re-record a new tune given out in class several times in sequence on another cassette tape. This allowed him to hear a particular tune repeatedly without the tedium of stopping, starting and rewinding the cassette. Further, he stated that hearing a tune recurrently in such a manner assisted him especially in learning tunes by ear.

More recently Andy has employed a slightly different approach with the tapes through maintaining what he termed his "wee archive". This involved recording any new tunes introduced by the teacher onto another separate cassette tape. The separate tape was then labelled and kept in a safe place so that Andy had a permanent record, contained on one tape, of all the tunes that had been covered in class.

The primary use that Andy made of his recording from the fiddle class during the study period was as a means of repeating the whole fiddle lesson again at home. In doing so, it was common for Andy to play the fiddle along with the cassette and to repeat items as he felt necessary by stopping the cassette and rewinding. Other parts of the lesson which were less relevant to him would be fast-forwarded. An example of how Andy used the recordings he made in the fiddle class may be found on the compact disc which accompanies this thesis (Item 1, example 1; see also Appendix 4 ii. for notes on each item on the CD). The procedure of repeating each lesson again

in this manner would only be done once or twice, however. As a consequence, the practice that Andy did at the beginning of the week (following the fiddle lesson on a monday night) differed from the practice he did toward the end of the week. Andy thus made a distinction between what he called his “shorter” and his “longer” practice sessions:

The shorter sessions would be when I’ve just about got the tune. The longer sessions are the ones -- well the class is on the monday, my longer sessions would be a tuesday and a wednesday and it’ll sort of taper off because by then I’m getting used to the tune, and so I can just really play the tune by the thursday or the friday, really. Basically, I know where I’m going with fingering and stuff . . .

Andy expanded on what happened in his longer practice sessions:

I’ll listen to the tape and then follow the tape, probably stop, play some tunes that I can play again . . . then go back to the tune again. There’s sometimes, even if I’m in the new tune, I’ll get bored and just start playing nothing really . . . [If] I’m maybe having a wee problem with fingerings, no [not] finding strings properly, . . . I’ll just stop and have a wee rest and then go back to it again.

In the process of learning a new tune from the cassette tape, then, Andy sometimes either stopped playing altogether or played other pieces with which he was familiar in order to help relieve the difficulty of trying to learn a new tune.

The tape recorder, then, was a very important resource for Andy in learning the fiddle. It represented a way of repeating the fiddle lesson again and again and was useful as a way of reminding him of tunes that had been tackled in class. However, Andy did not always return to the tape recording in order to prompt his memory of a particular tune. In the tape diary, for example, he stated: “Trying to remember that tune we got, . . . I’ll try and remember it somehow without going back to the tape. If

I can find a little run in it somewhere, I'll probably remember how the tune goes." It appeared, then, that recalling a particular sequence or set of notes in a tune helped him to remember the rest of the piece.

### *Playing by ear*

Being able to learn and play repertoire on the fiddle by ear -- without the aid of written notation -- was something which Andy felt particularly strongly about. He explained why he would always choose to learn a tune in this way:

Well, I think there's a couple of reasons. One, because it's easier for me to learn by ear, because as I've said before, [written] music doesnae really interest me and so I find I can learn a tune pretty easily -- no pretty easily, but easier than reading by music. And then being involved a little bit with traditional music you realise that long ago that was how it was taught to you -- just by ear, and so I'm quite happy to go along just wi thousands of people before me and learn that way.

Thus, Andy preferred to learn tunes by ear because he believed that this method was consistent with the way that traditional music was learned on the fiddle in the past. In addition, he found it easier to learn a tune by ear than with written music. He explained how he felt about learning to read music:

. . . even now I realise I should be trying to learn it but I dinnae really want to . . . because I'm sure that there's loads of brilliant fiddlers that dinnae read music. No that I'm saying that I'm going to be a brilliant fiddler, I just want to play. I dinnae want to learn -- I mean I couldnae tell you what a six-eight [time signature] is, or a two-four, or a four-four, or anything like that; I've no idea.

Although Andy claimed not to be able to read music notation very well, and indeed did not particularly desire to do so, visualising the first few notes of a tune on the printed page could often help him remember the piece. In the tape diary he commented:



I've got some music in front of me. I won't be reading it but the first couple of notes sort of set me off. Sometimes [I'll] look at it thinking I might learn it by osmosis, but really I'm just staring at a page in fact as opposed to reading music. Like I say, the first two or three notes usually set me off.

It is interesting that Andy made a distinction between "staring at a page" and actually reading music. Despite the fact that Andy had a limited understanding of music notation, then, visualising the notes of a tune on the page acted as a catalyst for remembering the rest of the tune. Written music notation, then, was probably most useful to Andy as a *reminder* of the piece.

### *Improving tunes*

One technique that Andy employed to try and improve his playing of a particular tune was to play it faster than it actually should be played. In the tape diary he stated about one tune that he was learning: "Oh, that's a wee fast bit. I know I'm playing them too fast but I think if I play them too fast, when it comes to playing them at the proper speed I'll be able to do it." Another aspect of improving tunes was that Andy would add ornamentation to a piece -- for example, grace notes and slides -- at the point at which he felt reasonably competent at a tune, as we saw in Chapter Four.

It was also usual for Andy to repeat sections and phrases of a tune many times, as well as the whole tune itself, in order to improve the piece and, in some cases, to help him commit it to memory. He can be heard repeating a tune called "The Boys of Ballymot" several times on the accompanying CD (Item 1, example 2). However, although Andy could learn the basic melody of a tune fairly quickly, refining the tune could take a lot longer:

In the space of a week or two weeks I can usually learn a tune by ear. As more weeks go by the tune gets more smoother, i.e., there is not so much hesitation about what note comes next but it takes months before I think the tune is sweeter.

Thus, the *way* in which he played a tune was important to Andy. However, improving tunes was something that often required considerable patience. This point came across in a rather revealing diary entry dated 9 May 1996:

Been a wee bit lazy because I knew I would have a fortnight to learn two tunes. Got a wee bit frustrated at the end of the first week because I wasn't happy with the way the tune "Pretty Peggy" was going, but I was just trying to go too fast too soon. But when these thoughts come into your head, you think, "I've been playing the fiddle for three years now", and the tunes that I've known for two years don't sound all that good. Some doubts creep in that you'll never be competent. However, that's only after a bad session. Most times I enjoy the practice and never think how bad I am because I know it will take a long time to become competent.

Andy was somewhat critical, then, of his own efforts as a learner. He was also aware, as an adult, of the passage of time.

### *Summary*

The length of Andy's practice sessions on the fiddle varied, ranging from twenty minutes to two and a half hours. These were normally carried out on weekdays rather than at the weekend. Practice sessions for Andy often began with a warm-up which consisted of familiar tunes. He made substantial use of a tape recorder to help him learn new repertoire. He also preferred to learn and play fiddle tunes by ear. One reason for this was that he was not fluent at reading conventional music notation. To help him learn a new tune, Andy often interspersed learning it with other pieces with which he was familiar. He also tended to repeat tunes quite a lot in an attempt to try and commit them to memory as well as to improve them.

### **Roy's practice sessions**

The practice sessions that Roy undertook varied quite radically in their length:

Eh, sometimes I can go for a week and play it [the fiddle] for twenty minutes in the week. Other times I could play it for, you know, on a saturday, for example, during the day I could play it for two, maybe two and a half hours, you know, which is madness until my neck gets sore or something. Em, so it would very much vary. I would say on average in a week, em, a couple of hours, something like that.

He described how he normally began a practice session:

Eh, tighten the bow up, take the fiddle down, em, rub my thumb over the strings to make sure it's sounding roughly in tune, as much as I can determine it is; em, probably just play something fairly mindless, well, probably just play a little sort of riff or something, something which I sort of find very easy to play, eh, on the fiddle. This is a sort of warning to my flat-mates that I'm about to make a lot of noise and they'd better get out quick! [laughs]

Although Roy joked a little about the start of his practice sessions, it appeared that playing something simple on the fiddle acted as a warm-up to the remainder of the session. The "riff" he described might consist of a section in a familiar tune.

He explained what would cause him to stop practising in any given practice session:

. . . often one of the more common things, in fact, for me to practise I think is when I'm gonna go out or something, and it's that sort of -- in past between coming back from work . . . and having tea . . . and going out in the evening. That's quite a common time for me to practise. So usually, it would stop when I'm about to go out. . . . So usually when I stop, I don't really want to stop, which is a good thing, . . . it's usually something that stops me.

Thus, Roy tailored his practice sessions to fit round about other activities, and the length of a particular practice session was often dictated by that fact that he had another activity to do. In addition to the practice he did in the evenings before going out, there were instances where Roy played the fiddle in the early hours of the morning. Roy commented in the tape diary, for example: "Eh, 3rd of May, 7 o'clock in the morning with an extra heavy mute on." Indeed, Roy frequently practised the

fiddle muted at home in an effort to dampen the sound of the fiddle, so as not to disturb others.

### *Use of a tape recorder*

Although Roy used to bring a tape recorder along to the fiddle classes in order to record material, he mentioned that he now no longer does so. His use of the tape recorder in the past, however, focused solely on recording the new tunes that the teacher gave the class. Such recordings would subsequently have been played only once or twice in his practice sessions at home, and were used primarily to refresh his memory of a particular tune. He described the changes that have taken place regarding his use of the tape recorder:

Em, I used to record tunes that the teacher played before learning them because I try and be a purist. I've tried to learn it by ear even though I've sometimes had the music . . . I've done it a bit less recently, . . . 'cause people [the teachers] have tended to give out the music. . . . What I've done is instead of using the taped music, I've used the sheet music to refer to, to refresh my memory when I get home.

The fact that music was often handed out by the teacher in class, then, meant that Roy obtained a permanent record of the tune in a printed form. Consequently, Roy no longer felt the need to make recordings in the lesson. Another reason for not taping material from the class was that Roy found that the tapes could be quite difficult to use at home in a practical sense. He maintained: "I find it too much trouble now, mucking about with the tape, rewinding it, and it's really bad quality as well."

### *Learning by ear*

Roy has already hinted in a comment above that he believed learning by ear to be the "purist" way of learning traditional music. He emphasised this point further by

saying: "I do think, I know a lot of people say it and I do agree, that you learn it better if you learn it by ear." Although he viewed learning by ear positively, however, he also felt that there were problems with this kind of learning:

Well, it's the sort of soap-grinding bit; . . . you've got a tune, it's sort of in the head, and just stopping trying to remember what goes next, . . . I find that almost too much like hard work. I like to sort of enjoy myself, so if the music was there I'd be more tempted to actually look at the music and play. . . . I'd play a lot through the music until I can, you know, just walk away from the music and I just suddenly realise that I know how to play it anyway . . .

Whilst in principle Roy believed that it was a good idea to learn tunes by ear, then, in reality he actually more often employed sheet music to do so. The reason for this was that trying to learn a tune by ear could be rather monotonous and required a considerable degree of patience. However, although Roy used sheet music to *learn* the tune, his eventual aim was to be able to *play* a particular tune by ear -- without the use of written notation. Thus Roy appeared to make a distinction between *learning* a tune by ear, and actually *playing* it by ear. Paradoxically, however, Roy went on to say that he actually felt it was possible for him to *learn* a tune more quickly by ear than with the use of written notation:

I think you learn quicker by ear. I mean, when I say coming away from the music and realising I can play it, eh, off by heart, that's after playing it a lot really from the music. If I'd been playing by ear -- if I had somebody playing a tune to me even if I was just playing along, I'd have learnt it, you know, much quicker than that. But it's just that I find it a bit more enjoyable just learning it from music because I can just sit down and actually play it to a better level of competence earlier to enjoy it a bit more earlier.

Although Roy could learn tunes by ear without too much difficulty, then, he preferred to learn them using written music. This is because learning using the written music gave him a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment at an earlier stage in the learning

process from being able to play a tune to some degree of competency. Comments he made in the tape diary about whether he was playing from the written music or playing by ear showed that there was a constant interchange between the use of written music and ear-playing in his practice sessions. Moreover, the way in which he learned tunes was constantly shifting from an aural mode to a visual one. An example on the accompanying CD (Item 2, example 2) illustrates how he moved freely from one source to another.

### *Use of lists*

One tactic that Roy employed in his learning was to keep lists of the tunes he could play by ear and those he could not. He talked about how he used these lists in the context of his practice sessions:

. . . sometimes . . . I'll think I know this tune very well and I'll sort of not look at the music and I'll try and learn it. When I get to that stage, just to become complicated, I would write it on a bit of paper -- here's the accountant coming out here, . . . as a tune I have in my head but I can't play by ear.

It is interesting that Roy connected the fact that he kept these lists with the fact that he was an accountant by profession. Roy was someone who was familiar with dealing with numbers and other data in an organised fashion, and it appeared that these skills had been transferred to his fiddle playing. He went into greater detail about how he used the lists:

I only do this very occasionally. I would actually sit down and I would go through the list of things which I want to learn by ear, you know. . . . I would play through this list from start to finish before transferring anything to the -- "I would definitely know it" list.

Roy described how he would work through the list of tunes he can already play by ear:

... I might actually look at a list, another list which I have of tunes which I do have in my head and that's a bigger list thankfully, and I would just basically – it's on the wall, it's on the notice board on the wall, I would basically look at a tune and go, right, I'll play that.

Copies of Roy's "lists of tunes" -- the tunes he could play by ear and the tunes he was learning to play by ear -- appear on the next two pages in figures 5.1 and 5.2.

As well as the routines which revolved round the use of these lists, Roy mentioned that there were other routines he might employ in his practice. In addition, he might switch between various methods during any one practice session. Sometimes his practice sessions were based on playing through sheet music: "I might go through a pile of sheets, another routine"; or playing from printed collections of fiddle tunes: "I might choose one of the two or so books which I go through"; or sometimes just looking "through a few tunes to find one that I fancied playing". It was also important for Roy to play tunes that he learned some time ago in order to check that he could still remember them. He said: "I'd try and not leave any tune untouched for too long in case I forget it."

#### *Content of practice sessions*

From the data contained in the tape diary, it became clear that Roy played many tunes -- normally at least ten -- in a practice session. One reason for this was that he did not particularly favour repeating a tune a great deal in his practice sessions. Roy said: "The general idea is to learn more tunes, as many tunes as possible". Indeed, it was not uncommon for Roy to play most tunes once only in a single practice session with limited repetition. Roy did not like to spend a great deal of time on a particular



Figure 5.1 List of the tunes that Roy can play by ear

THE SPARKS	DUCK POND OF GOWDURGH
FINGERS HARSHORE	FLOWERS OF GOWDURGH
MR McLEW'S REEL	STATEN ISLAND
NINE PARTY TO ROSKERRY	WILKINSFORD
HIGH REEL	MORRISON'S JIG
HAMILTON RAPS	BROWN SUNDOWN REEL
HUMOUR OF SEAGRAM	ARMED HIGHMOORS
DROPPY MASSIE	CORRIGAN'S WELCOME
MINDRETE	TAIL TIDDLE
FAREWELL TO WHISKY	BOYS OF BLUEHILL
LOUIS WALTZ	HARVEST HOME
COLUMBO HOLE (2)	TRUMPET HORNPIPE
TRIP TO DUNDEE	FROST IS THE OVER
MARY CAMPY	WINTER DOLLS MADE
MIN SUGHER	LADY MARIAN OF
JIM ANDERSON REEL	DELL MARY THE TOWN
SCARCE O TATTIE	THE FARMER TO GIBBART
RYHN OF MAN	MISS LYALL
MICHELLE ANDERSON	THE TUSHKAR
CHIEF'S NEW FURNITE	SPOT OF REPTITUDE
LYNNIE'S REEL	THE SOUND OF SLEAT
HUMLOCKER REEL	THE HIGHWAY TO GOWDURGH
CORRIGAN'S RANDELS	REFORM THE POUTAX
PETER'S PEARL BOAT	MERRY BLACKSMITH
MURDO'S SONNIE BYRE	LES OF A DUCK
BUSLE HORN	LT. MASLIN'S JIG
LANSAN'S BALL	KENMORE'S UP A WA
O'KEEFE'S SHOE	CHARLIE HUNTER
MURRAY KISS THE DANCEMAN	DANCING THE BABY
FROM WASHINGTON	MCNEIL OF USABUE
JIG OF SEARS	
SEAR'S JIG	
SPOT'S SECRET	
HIGH ROAD TO LINTON	
BEW ANDERSON'S SUNRISE	
THE AGE IS DEAR	
LETHE McABUE	
JESSIE SMITH	
SEANIE McLEW	
BATTLE OF THE SOMME	
ASHISAN'S FAREWELL	
FAREWELL TO MISS	
MARY DANCE	
ARCANUS TOWN	

Figure 5.2 List of the tunes that Roy is learning to play by ear

THE HOG'S MARCH ON THE MIDDEN	REEL
TURKEY IN THE STRAW	DA SROGER
(ARKANSAS TRAVELLER)	HONORIC SHAW OF HISHFIELD
REIGN THE POL TAX	HISHFIELD MARY
ST KILDA REEL / EXCELSIOR	HECTOR THE HERO
MISS SUSAN COOPER	ST ANNE'S REEL
NEW HIGH LEVEL / SALLY SANDERS	
THE FIREFLY	
MAD BEHIND THE BAR	
THE APPLE TREE	
TEW GUNNY BIT	
THE RAKES OF KILDARE	
SNOUS IN A BLANKET / TEN HEN I AM	
AN SIOLLA RUADH	REEL
THE BROOM	DA SROGER
SPINDLE SHANKS	TARBOLTON LOOSE
ROAD TO SLIGO	THE MILLER O' HIRN

tune in any one session in case he lost interest in that piece. His philosophy regarding learning a particular tune was: "I'll play it again some other time and . . . every time I play it I'll get better at it and it'll soon come together, so I don't want to labour over anything." Item 2, example 2, on the accompanying CD illustrates Roy playing a number of different tunes in sequence.

It was also common for Roy to intersperse the learning of a new tune with other pieces with which he was familiar. He stated whilst in the midst of learning one tune, for example:

Mm, I'm almost there. I'll leave it and go to another tune which will be from music so I can come back to that and it will help me remember it, hopefully.

### *Aims*

During the period in which this study took place, it was a priority of Roy's to learn certain tunes as quickly as possible. A written diary entry stated:

Now have five new tunes to learn from yesterday's class plus three on another sheet which we didn't learn. I am learning things slightly more quickly of late to try and learn as much as fast as possible since those are tunes I need to learn for ALP and for playing next time in Braemar . . .

Indeed, Roy was particularly keen on playing in sessions:

I've played in pubs/hotels the last two nights and have ALP on Monday, so there is a danger of "fiddle fatigue" -- so there may not be much practising to report on next week.

Thus Roy had set himself targets or goals in his learning beyond that of the fiddle class. However, although Roy could see an improvement in the speed at which he learned tunes, in a comment made in the written diary he reflected on his perceived standard of fiddle playing:

No noticeable sign of improvement in the last few months -- but looking back to a year ago there is a big improvement in certain areas, so this is encouraging.

Improving, and indeed noticing an improvement in fiddle playing then, could take a good deal of time and patience.

### *Summary*

The home practice sessions that Roy undertook varied considerably in their length. Whereas certain practice sessions lasted for twenty minutes, others could last for as long as two and a half hours. Roy usually began his practice sessions with a warm-up. He had several routines that he employed in his practice sessions, one of which included playing from his lists of tunes. Although Roy was able to learn tunes by ear quite easily, he actually preferred to use written music to do so. Using the written music meant that he was able to play entire tunes more quickly, and this gave him a sense of satisfaction and achievement. As a result of the practical difficulties he found in using the tape recorder, he no longer used this machine to help him learn tunes.

### **Jim G.'s practice sessions**

During term-time when the fiddle class took place, Jim generally practised the fiddle every second day. It was particularly important for Jim to practise on a tuesday night, following the fiddle class on mondays, as a result of the pitfalls he perceived in "forgetting" tunes. Practising on a tuesday capitalised on the fact that the events of the fiddle class and the new repertoire given out by the teacher tended to be fresher in his memory than at a later point during the week. Following the practice session on tuesday, the main times that Jim practised the fiddle were on fridays and especially at weekends.

Jim normally began his practice sessions with what he termed a “warm-up” which would last around five to ten minutes. During the warm-up he would usually play tunes with which he was familiar:

I would generally start with a sort of tune which I like and which is easy but which has got a good sort of, an easy sort of rhythm to it. Something like a pipe march, . . . stuff like that which is easyish and not too fast to begin with, you know. Just to get the fingers moving.

The fact that Jim generally began his practice sessions in such a way also emerged in some of the comments he made on tapes, for example:

I'll just play a few pieces to see how well I'm playing this evening . . . Usually with this sort of thing I'm just trying to, eh, get the feel for the notes and just . . . sort of getting the dig of that bow and just getting my fingers loosened up a little bit.

Tunes that Jim commonly played during the warm-up included “Ashokan Farewell” and a march, “Walter Douglas MBE”. An example of one of Jim’s warm-ups may be found on the CD (Item 3, example 1). Whereas the rest of the practice session was conducted largely through using written music, the warm-up was generally performed by ear. The function of the warm-up, in addition to helping to achieve mobility in the fingers was also, according to Jim, to “make sure that I’m sounding OK.” Interestingly, if Jim felt that his fiddle playing was not sounding good during the warm-up, he might well quit the practice session at that point. The other purposes of the warm-up, then, seem to have been as a confidence builder or indicator.

The length of Jim’s practice sessions was dictated to some extent by outside factors as well as personal preference:

. . . 'cause of family circumstances . . . I don't have as much time as I would like; so generally I've got a fair idea of how much -- I do half an

hour sort of thing, so I've got an idea at the beginning that I'm going to do that much. . . . I've usually got something else to do so I'm not . . . in a position of just playing on . . .

A common time for Jim to play the fiddle was at around half past nine in the evening on a week day, when his children had gone to sleep. However, at weekends it was quite common for the children to participate in his practice sessions. Indeed, Jim mentioned that his young son, Robbie, would sometimes try to join in by playing the tambourine or a small drum.

Although the length of Jim's practice sessions varied, there was a routine that he adhered to:

. . . the routine's always the same. The fiddle's hanging there; dust it down and I pick it up and I play by ear my favourite pieces, and then I'll have my music to hand to play the favourite pieces that aren't learnt to ear . . .

The fact that there was a routine to Jim's practice activities is interesting. It indicates that his practice sessions, far from being a rather disorganised period of time, had a definite structure.

### *Learning new tunes*

Jim described how he would generally approach learning a new tune:

I just play through . . . the tune a few times, just over and over again. I mean if there's any particularly difficult bits, I'll slow down and go over them a few times I suppose, you know, just sort of trying to see how it should sound.

Indeed, Jim made some use of repetition in his practice in order to improve a particular tune. Sometimes this involved repeating a section of the tune, or the whole tune, several times.

Another technique that Jim used to help him learn new repertoire was to alternate the learning of a new tune with other pieces with which he was more familiar. He maintained that if a certain tune he was trying to learn was not, in his words, “getting anywhere”, then he would “just go on to happy stuff again”. Indeed, he termed the familiar pieces that he returned to in this context as his “happier tunes”. Going back to these tunes appeared to serve two functions. First, it represented a way of relieving the frustration of the often slow process of learning a new tune. Second, it helped to restore Jim’s self-confidence which was sometimes lessened through attempting to learn a new tune.

Although Jim normally played the warm-up without the aid of written notation, as we have seen, it appeared that the bulk of the rest of his practice at home was conducted using written music. There were two reasons why Jim chose to learn tunes using written notation. One was that he could read music notation fairly fluently and had done so for a number of years before coming to the fiddle class. The other was that he found difficulty in learning tunes by ear. He compared his efforts at learning tunes by ear with that of the other members in the fiddle class:

Maybe I’m a bit slower than some others, that’s my impression that I get that some of the other people are more adept at picking up by ear and more comfortable with that.

However, despite the fact that Jim found it difficult to learn tunes by ear, he still considered playing by ear to be worthwhile. Indeed, he regretted not being able to play some of his favourite tunes by ear:



. . . there's one or two [tunes] which are my favourites which I unfortunately still need the music for. I can play them without music but as soon as I try it [laughs]. I mean, as long as it's there, I can sort of then play it. I don't know why that is.

Physically possessing the written music for tunes may also have been useful to him because it offered a form of security.

As a result of the problems that Jim faced in learning tunes by ear, he would often go to some lengths to obtain a copy of the printed music. If a tune was not handed out by the teacher at the lesson, Jim would check to see if it appeared in one of the collections of fiddle tunes which he possessed at home (e.g. *Kerr's Merry Melodies*, Books One to Four). If not, Jim would usually visit the Music Library in Edinburgh in a bid to try and obtain a printed source. He talked about the problems he encountered if the teacher did not distribute the written music in the lesson:

. . . that bothers me if we don't get the sheet of music because then I think, even with my little tape recording that I've made maybe of the piece, I think, eh, that's a problem. So what I've done generally is I've gone up to the Music Library on George IV Bridge and tried to find the piece of music. Because it's the only way that I'm going to get back into it, or maybe someone like Ken in the class, . . . you might get a piece of music from somebody else, they've written it down, and, eh, again, I'm home and dry if I've got the piece of music written down.

The importance of having the written music in order to attempt learning a tune was a significant factor in the shape of the practice sessions that Jim undertook. For instance, data from the tape diary showed that in one practice session, Jim had delayed learning a tune because he expected that the sheet music for it would be given out in class the following week. The next week, however, another teacher appeared to teach the class, and Jim was unable to obtain the written music for this tune. Matters were further complicated as Jim did not bring his tape recorder along to the fiddle class to record new tunes presented (his use of the tape recorder is

detailed below) and, once again, the written music for these tunes was not handed-out. These factors affected his home practice in quite a dramatic way. Indeed, because Jim did not have either a written or an aural record of these pieces, and was unable to remember the tunes solely from having played them in class, it was impossible for him to practise them at home. Jim thus described himself as being “all at sea”, and was forced to change the format of his practice accordingly: “So instead, what I’ll probably just do is, this week . . . practise some of the tunes I know, I know already, and, eh, I’m wanting to learn by ear.” Extracts from this particular practice session may be heard on Item 3, example 1 of the CD.

Although Jim had considerable difficulty in learning tunes by ear, it was somewhat paradoxical that he still desired to be able to play tunes in this way. To assist him in this task, Jim kept a *list* of the tunes he could play by ear and those he could not. In the left-hand column of this list he wrote down the names of all the tunes that he could already play by ear on the fiddle, and in the right-hand column he wrote down the names of those that he was in the process of *learning* to play by ear. The initial idea for keeping such a list came from his class-mate, Roy, as detailed above:

Roy gave me a good tip . . . He said draw a piece of paper up with -- write down the left-hand column all the tunes you know by ear and down the right-hand column, all those you’re trying -- in the process of learning by ear. And I did that, ’cause right enough, I’d never made an inventory of all the tunes I actually thought I could do by ear. And then [I] went upstairs and then said, well, let’s try it. Can I play them all by ear? And I found one or two that I maybe wasn’t quite -- so I put them into the right hand column you know, and gradually I’ve sort of . . . filtered more from the right hand column into the left . . . So . . . I know the tunes I can play now and I know how to target my favourite tunes that I should be able to play . . . That’s been quite a good little method.

In Jim’s case, then, using the lists gave him a tangible goal or target to work towards. In addition, visualising the tunes he could play by ear written down in this way gave

him a sense of personal satisfaction. Unlike much of Jim's practice which was geared toward learning tunes so that they could be played in the fiddle class, the use of lists had little to do with the requirements of the group. Instead, the list provided a means of targeting a personal goal as well as a way of monitoring achievements.

#### *Use of a tape recorder*

Each week at the fiddle class, Jim generally brought along a portable, battery-operated, tape recorder in order to record new tunes that were presented by the teacher. Spoken dialogue concerning the tune was not recorded. Despite the fact that Jim made these recordings, however, he did not always refer back to these in his practice sessions. Indeed, it was only in cases where he did not manage to acquire the sheet music for a particular tune that he would return to his recording. He described his use of this device:

. . . generally, if we've got the [sheet] music, I'll scrape through it and it'll come back pretty immediately. . . . and if not, I will listen to the little tape recording just maybe once or twice . . . I tend not to, I don't archive them away or store them or label them or anything like that. I've only one tape and I just . . . rotate it over and over again, so it's for short term use.

The cassette recording that Jim made in the fiddle class, then, served only as a back-up for learning material if the printed music was not available. The function of the tape when it was referred to, however, was simply to help Jim remember the tune. Further, the tunes that he recorded on the tape were only for temporary use and were not kept for any defined longer term purpose.

#### *Use of a computer*

In addition to the tape recorder, Jim had another device which he sometimes employed to help him learn new tunes:

I've got a little package on my computer through in the back room which is a musical package . . . and it allows you to key in the notes . . . Press "play" and it will play it absolutely accurately. Of course, it sounds horrible as a computer would do . . . [but] you can vary the sound and vary the speed. . . . I have seen myself, in the past, if it's a difficult piece of music and I sort of think "that's not in the rhythm of that", . . . I can just put a few bars in and it'll play it through.

Thus, in instances where Jim had a specific difficulty with a particular tune, he would use the music programme on his Apple Macintosh computer to allow him to hear how the tune should sound. Although he generally did not use this device to a great extent, he maintained:

It's always something there that I'm aware of in the back of my mind as a back-up if I'm absolutely – there's no way this sequence of notes has got a rhythm or anything going for it, I might put it on there just to hear it. Also, the good thing about this is you can key it in and change the tempo 'cause often, you know, some tunes sound pretty miserable played at learning speed.

Although the use of the computer might appear to be a somewhat sophisticated aid to learning to play tunes on the fiddle, the fact that Jim was heavily involved with using computers at his place of work may partially explain why he favoured using such technology.

#### *The other members in the fiddle class*

One goal that Jim had in his practice sessions was simply to keep up with the tunes that were being done in the class at that time. Consequently, his practice sessions involved playing tunes which he knew would be played in class again the following week. His practice sessions, then, were dictated to some extent by what the teacher was teaching in class as well as keeping up with his class-mates in terms of the repertoire that he could play.

Apart from this motivating influence of the others members in the class, however, we have already seen how Roy affected Jim's learning in terms of the list method. In addition, Jim described how his class colleagues had also had a more direct bearing on the learning process:

I don't think we've done it this year but for the last two years we've done it occasionally, sort of meeting, you know, . . . outside the classes . . . in Ken's surgery we'd have a wee practice like that so -- just went in for a tune and be able to sort of commonly discuss what sort of tunes we like -- and sort of sift out repertoire I suppose that we'd got from the ALP classes. So we'd say: "This one's good, would you like to play it?" So we'd maybe try and practise that so we could play it . . .

In the past, then, these meetings with his class-mates outside the ALP classes may have played a part in helping Jim decide which tunes he would actually practise at home. This particular example also shows the extent to which learners were affected by their peers outside the environment of the fiddle class itself.

### *Summary*

Summarising the data from Jim's practice sessions, then, he can be seen as someone who normally followed a set routine in his practice. Jim usually began by playing a warm-up which consisted of his favourite tunes which he could play by ear. Following the warm-up, he generally attempted to learn new tunes. The learning of new tunes was usually broken up by playing other pieces with which he was familiar (his "happier tunes"). The tape recorder and computer were the two modes of technology that Jim employed to help him learn the fiddle. These were not used in every practice session, however, and their use was dependent on Jim's requirements as a learner. Jim was reliant on written music in order to learn most tunes and although he desired to play tunes by ear, he generally found it difficult to so.

Nevertheless, like Roy, he kept lists of tunes in order to help him achieve the goal of playing tunes by ear.

### **Jim M.'s practice sessions**

Jim M. talked about the amount of time that he normally devoted to his fiddle practice:

Usually about twenty minutes, half an hour. It's unusual, but I've gone longer than that; I mean I have occasionally put in, I suppose, forty-five minutes or nearly an hour, but I mean that's unusual. But that used to be until recently five or six times a week, but less so now; three times a week.

Indeed, during the core investigation period, Jim was not able to devote as much time to practising as usual. This was because he was participating in an Open University course which involved a good deal of home study.

Although Jim did not always follow the same procedure in his practice sessions, he described how he generally began:

There may be, em, at any one time, three or four tunes that I quite enjoy playing or, you know, that I've known for a while and . . . am reasonably good on. And . . . I might start off with them, you know, just kinda work through them to kinda warm up or loosen up a bit.

The playing of familiar tunes, then, at the beginning of his practice sessions constituted a warm-up to the remainder of the time.

There were two main factors that would cause Jim to end a practice session: "Either because I'm fed-up, you know, because I'm scunnered [disgusted] with it, or, eh, because I don't really have any more time." This second reason was demonstrated by

a comment Jim made in the tape diary at the end of one practice session: "I'm going to have to go now and pick up one of the kids . . . so I'll need to stop there, and it didn't seem too bad really."

Jim sometimes made use of technical exercises such as scales and arpeggios in his practice. The playing of such material was undertaken primarily in a bid to improve his intonation on the instrument. Indeed, intonation was one aspect of his playing that Jim was particularly concerned about and was trying to improve. He was clearly, therefore, concerned with *how* tunes sounded, as well as simply being able to play them.

#### *Learning and playing tunes by ear*

Being able to play tunes by ear was another important goal in Jim's practice. Indeed, even though he possessed written music for a particular tune, his intention would always be to try and learn that tune by ear. He explained why this was the case:

Well, . . . part of that's because it doesn't feel like the sort of music that you should be playing from a page and part of that, I'm sure, is because I don't read that fluently . . . so it's not an easy option for me.

Learning a tune by ear for Jim, then, was viewed as an easier option than learning it from written notation. Two tunes that he played by ear, "Da Slockit Light" and "Morrison's Jig", may be heard on the accompanying CD (Item 4, examples 1 and 2). In addition, Jim preferred to learn tunes by ear because he believed that this was the manner in which one should play traditional music. He compared his efforts at reading music with the others in the class:

. . . I've noticed in the class that . . . there's some people who are obviously, you know, much more fluent than me and can quite readily just play from the page. It's possibly an easier option for them to play



that way, and it certainly isn't for me so in fact . . . it's a bit of a pay off for me in being able to learn, learn by ear because I don't have to struggle trying to read it.

Jim is alluding to the important point here, that amongst the members of the fiddle class, the “easiest” ways of learning were selected by each individual. Although Jim said that he was not fluent at reading music, however, written music was useful to him in helping him to retrieve a tune from his memory. In the course of learning the tune, “Kenny Gillies of Portnalong”, for instance, he mentions that he is trying to remember the tune from the sheet music but that he is not actually “reading” the music (see Item 4, example 3 on the accompanying CD).

In addition, although Jim preferred to play tunes by ear, he sometimes had difficulties in remembering the whole of a particular tune. In the tape diary, for instance, he said about one tune that he was learning: “I’m not actually sure how the end of that one goes”; and after some attempts at another tune said: “No, I need to find the music for that one”. Finding the written notation for a particular tune could also be problematic: “I was going to play some from reading but I can’t find any music”. Not having the appropriate resources to hand, in this case the sheet music, then, presented a further difficulty.

#### *Use of a tape recorder*

Like the majority of the other participants in this study, Jim usually brought a portable cassette recorder along to the fiddle lesson in order to record the new tunes that the teacher introduced. He talked about the role that these cassette recordings subsequently fulfilled in his practice sessions:

I listen to it once or twice, . . . because sometimes I found that if I didn't do that I had no, literally no recollection of a tune . . . , you know, as a stimulus. I mean you could readily recall it when you heard it again, so it was just, it was as a kind of aide-memoire in that sense. Eh, you know,

and once I was familiar with the tune again in my head and was happy to play it, then I just played it.

Jim made use of the tape recording primarily to refresh his memory of certain tunes. He did not usually feel the need to return to the tape at a later date as he felt that the tape had already served its purpose. It also appeared that Jim employed the tape primarily as a way of hearing the notes and the rhythm of the tune, rather than the style in which the teacher was playing, for instance.

### *The difficulties of learning*

That learning to play the fiddle could pose difficulties for learners and could often be highly frustrating was especially apparent in Jim's case. Indeed, the lack of time that Jim was able to devote to learning the fiddle, and the frustrations that resulted from this, emerged from a number of the comments he made in the tape diary and the written diary. In a written diary entry in week four of the study, for example, he wrote:

One or two less rewarding practice sessions. Perhaps the consequences of infrequent and irregular practising are beginning to show. Can't remember a lot of the tunes we learned last year -- must look out the music to freshen up playing.

He made a similar comment in the written diary in week five: "Frustrated at not having enough time to practise in a way which might improve my standard of playing -- seem to be only maintaining current level." In week six, the situation seemed to have got even worse: "Finding that less frequent practices have to last longer to avoid loss of skill. Later part of sessions tend to feel more rewarding, but still constrained by time."

Another source of difficulty came from the fact that he did not attend classes at the Adult Learning Project during the study period, as we saw in Chapter Three. Indeed, this made quite a difference to his fiddle learning in the sense that there was less motivation and impetus to practise the fiddle. He commented in week five of the written diary, for example: "Reading some of the earlier tunes we learned at ALP. Missing the encouragement and enthusiasm of mixing with other players and from hearing music performed live." Not attending classes also had an effect on the repertoire that Jim was learning. Jim regretted not obtaining new repertoire from the teacher, and consequently ended up practising tunes he had learned previously. He said (about not going to classes that term) in Interview Two:

Well, I missed it I suppose. It made me feel a bit like I wasn't covering any new ground, you know, I was just kindve standing still in a sense, em, you know, I wasn't very happy . . .

As a result of not learning any new tunes, then, Jim felt that he had made little progress that term and had become somewhat disheartened. He did, however, attempt to learn other tunes from sheet music such as the reel "Soldier's Joy" which one of his children was learning to play on the fiddle. This proved problematic, though, because of the difficulties Jim found in reading music notation.

### *Summary*

Jim normally practised the fiddle for around twenty minutes to half an hour in each practice session. Although he used to practise the fiddle five or six times per week, during the study period this was limited to around three times a week due to time constraints. Practice sessions for Jim normally began with a warm-up which consisted of familiar tunes. Learning by ear was his preferred method of learning -- he was not fluent at reading music notation. Jim also brought a portable cassette recorder along to the fiddle class in order to record the new material that was

introduced. He used these recordings at home as a way of reminding him of particular tunes.

### **Alison's practice sessions**

Alison frequently travelled away from home and found that she had to fit in her practice sessions around these journeys, when she did not normally have the opportunity to take her fiddle with her. She indicated how often she would practise when residing at home:

. . . say I'm at home, say for a period of six weeks and I'm not going away a lot, I would practise every day. Em, usually . . . there'll be maybe a day or week or a couple of days where I don't, but normally every day, you know.

The amount of time that Alison devoted to practising the fiddle would usually vary from around half an hour to three quarters of an hour per day. Alison outlined how she would normally begin a practice session:

Well, just make sure it's in tune. I have a tuning fork but my violin . . . is very good at staying in tune anyway. And then I would, well, play on the open strings just for a bit and play very long, slow bows . . . and sometimes then play tunes that I know and like to get me into the mood and get the feeling of it. And, eh, also tunes that I think are good for fingering and just to loosen me up . . .

After tuning the fiddle, then, Alison began her practice sessions by playing a warm-up which usually consisted of both various exercises and playing familiar tunes that she liked.

There were three factors which brought a practice session to a close: 1) a lack of time, 2) feeling tired, and 3) feeling that some kind of achievement had been made. Alison referred to this last point as: "when I feel I've got somewhere". Gaining a

sense of achievement was important to Alison. This tied in with her approach to practising the fiddle in general:

I think my approach is probably . . . doing something repeatedly. I actually quite like doing things repeatedly. . . . I would get great satisfaction out of feeling I've got -- I understand something or I've managed to do something properly . . . . I could play the same thing for an hour, almost, I really could do that, much as everybody would hate it, to feel I've got somewhere with it.

Thus, Alison attached little value to the quantity or number of tunes that she played; rather it was the *quality* of her playing that was important. Indeed, she was willing to repeat an individual phrase of a tune many times in order to try and improve it. She described how she was learning the tune "Are Ye Sleepin' Maggie?":

I've really been practising my bowing with it, because it's all about how you bow that tune. . . . to work at something like that gives me an enormous satisfaction . . . I'd rather play one thing for months and play it well to be -- really think I've really got this now, . . . really got the feeling of this tune and play it well, than play fifteen tunes . . .

A sound extract of Alison learning this tune can also be found on the accompanying CD (Item 5, example 2). In learning new repertoire, then, she was consciously trying to improve the technical side of playing such as her bowing and fingering. Having a good technical command of the instrument was particularly important to her. Item 5, example 1, on the CD, "The Longhope Lifeboat Disaster", also illustrates her preoccupation with her tone quality.

During her practice sessions Alison sometimes took what she called a "mental break" in which she stopped practising the fiddle for a time in order to help her learn a new tune. In one practice session, for example, she stated: "Right, I've taken my mental break and I'm going to give it a fresh go" (see further CD, Item 5, example 2). One

purpose of this was to help her concentrate. Another technique which Alison often employed in the course of learning a new tune was to alternate it with tunes that she knew well. In the tape diary she said:

I think I'll have to play something different -- the old favourite. [She plays a tune called "Ashokan Farewell".] I like that song. That was probably just a wee bit to restore my confidence.

The fact that Alison could analyse *why* she performed such an action may relate to her university training in psychology.

#### *Use of a tape recorder*

Alison brought a tape recorder to the fiddle class in order to record any new tunes that were introduced by the teacher. She explained how she used the recordings from the class in her practice at home:

What I'll do is I'll listen to the tune a couple of times just to remind myself of it, 'cause what I often find is when I've come to the end of a lesson and I think I've mastered it, you know, at the ALP class, and I'll go back and the next morning I'll wake up and I can't remember the tune [laughs]. And it just needs triggered and so I kindve use the tape as a trigger.

Thus, Alison used the tape as a catalyst to help her remember the tune. The tape also had another function, however:

. . . often in the lesson you're so busy catching up with the notes you're not listening to how they [the teacher] phrased it and where they've put in grace notes, and so for me it's to get the, kind of, ornamentation and bowing and speed.

It seemed, then, as though Alison also used the tape as a way of reminding her of the *style* in which the teacher played the tune as well as of the subtleties of the music. However, Alison did not always make use of the tapes at home. She stated:

. . . because some of them [the tunes] are very straightforward, like some of the jigs and everything, . . . they go in very quickly and so I might just look at the bit of music. I'd rather look at the written music sometimes 'cause that can jog it off as well . . .

Using the tapes was not necessary, then, in cases where the tune was relatively simple. Indeed, sometimes Alison would refer to the written music instead of the tape recording in order to help her remember a particular tune. This was possibly because written music represented a quicker and more practical way of doing so.

### *Playing by ear*

Being able to play tunes by ear on the fiddle was an important goal for Alison. Indeed, Alison commented that ninety percent of the practice she actually did on the instrument was conducted by ear. Further, this was an aspect of playing the fiddle that she felt particularly strongly about:

I've just always learnt better by ear. . . . I would say my sight-reading, it's there – it's something I have now which I'm quite relieved I have, it helps; but to me it's just something dead; dead notes on the page. It's something I have to do, it's a skill that's a useful skill, but that's all. For me, learning by ear *is* music. That seems to me the natural way, it's always been.

Her experiences of learning the piano during her school-days played a significant role in shaping her values in this context:

. . . when I was young, . . . I would always learn music by ear even if I wasn't meant to be learning it by ear. . . . I'd have to . . . pretend to be sight-reading when I was actually playing it by ear. I'd just look and play the piano and I got into trouble for that because it was discouraged, you



know. It wasn't seen as a useful thing to learn by ear, it was just something you did, you know.

In learning classical music on the piano, then, Alison was actively discouraged from learning or playing the instrument by ear. It seems rather ironic that in learning the fiddle as an adult, however, she has actually been encouraged to learn in this way. Indeed, one reason why Alison was attracted to learning the fiddle was precisely because of the emphasis placed on aural skills in this genre.

Related to the fact that Alison preferred to learn tunes by ear, she mentioned that actually *hearing* a tune played a number of times was important. She outlined her "ideal way" of learning a tune:

. . . the ideal way of learning for me would be to hear a tune a couple of times, really understand it, and then em, use the music as a rough guide but not too heavily, so to kind of follow it with the music and be able to refer to the music when I'm learning but also be learning technique as well as you go along.

Thus Alison preferred to learn new repertoire through a combination of aural and visual modes. This is interesting in the light of her earlier comments about written music. Whereas Alison maintained that she did not like sight-reading, hearing a tune and *then* using the written music for it represented a successful means of learning the piece. Here is an extract from the tape diary which highlights the importance of actually hearing the tune first of all:

[It] makes a real difference when you know a tune. . . . when you've actually heard the tune just a couple of times and you haven't even been concentrating on it you've just been thinking it's a nice tune, rather than thinking, oh, I've got to listen to this so I can play it, . . .

### *Attending the fiddle class*

Like Jim M., Alison was unable to attend the fiddle class during the term in which the core investigation took place. Not taking part in classes had two effects on her learning. First, it made her feel the need for contact with others: "I'm certainly needing to do something with other people, whether it be the fiddle class, a teacher, or just playing with other folk. I would like that now." Second, as a result of not obtaining new repertoire from the teacher, she felt that the material she was practising had become rather "stale".

### *Summary*

Alison generally practised for half an hour to three quarters of an hour every day. Practice sessions normally began with a warm-up which usually consisted of exercises and familiar tunes. In learning a new tune, Alison sometimes returned to familiar tunes in order to restore her confidence. She also sometimes took a "mental break" to help her concentrate. Alison tended to repeat bars and phrases of tunes a good deal in her practice sessions. She used the recordings of the teacher's playing that she had made in the fiddle class 1) to remind her of a certain tune, and 2) to enable her to listen closely to the teacher's style of playing a particular piece. Further, although she felt that it was important to learn tunes by ear, her "ideal way" of learning a tune involved both hearing the piece and using the written music to learn it.

### **Ken's practice sessions**

Ken practised the fiddle around four times a week. These practice sessions normally lasted between twenty and forty minutes. The length of his practice sessions, however, was dependent on his professional and personal work-load and the amount of spare time that he had available. The time of day when he normally practised was

prior to his evening meal, although it was also quite common for him to do ten minutes practice in the morning before leaving home to go to work. Ken described saturday and sunday as being the “main times” for learning the fiddle, as he would often try to practise for an hour on a saturday morning or on a sunday afternoon. Practice sessions usually commenced by checking that his fiddle was in tune using an electronic tuning device. Following this, a warm-up was undertaken:

I'll usually play . . . a tune that I like and that I'm fairly familiar with, just to get things going.

Ken did not always begin his practice sessions by warming up, however. In the tape diary he stated, for example:

It's saturday the 18th at 8:25 in the morning, and time . . . [to] try and practise a bit of “Music of Spey”. First time I've had a chance to look at it since the class so I'm not going to warm up. I'm going to go straight into it reading from the music . . .

Although Ken maintained that he did not usually have a routine in his practice session because he “does what he feels like at the time”, there were two ways in which he would generally follow the warm-up period. One was to “. . . run through a couple of familiar tunes and then go onto the most recent that we've been learning”. The other was to

. . . go right back to the very early tunes that we did and try and work through everything, because there'll be tunes in there that I haven't played for three, or four, or five weeks.

The purpose of going back to these early tunes was to “try and keep some semblance of familiarity in the sort of forty-odd tunes that we've done that I can play, to try and keep them up to some kind of memory standard.” Returning to such pieces, then, acted as a type of revision exercise. An example of this sort of practice appeared in a

tape diary comment when Ken said: "I'm just having a go at a few old tunes just to keep my hand in." Whereas some sessions were specifically geared to learning material recently introduced in class, then, other practice sessions were based on rehearsing tunes that had been introduced at some point previously.

Whilst in the process of learning a new tune -- perhaps one which was to be learned for the purposes of playing in the fiddle class the following week -- it was common for Ken to return to other pieces with which he was familiar. The purpose of this was to break up the sometimes monotonous task of learning a new tune. Ken stated in the tape diary, for example: "Every now and again when things get desperate I'll break into a tune that I know like 'Brenda Stubbart' or 'Hector the Hero', just to give me consolation." The tunes that Ken liked and could already play reasonably well were known and labelled by him as his *old favourites*. Returning to these "old favourites" helped to boost Ken's morale in learning a new tune and prevented him from becoming too disheartened. Ken can be heard playing two of his old favourites, "Brenda Stubbart's Reel" and "Ashokan Farewell", on the accompany CD (Item 6, example 3).

Another technique that Ken employed to help him learn a new tune was to attempt the tune in one practice session, deliberately leave it for a period of time, and then return to it at a later date. Ken made the following statement in the tape diary, for instance, about the tune, "Pretty Peggy", which he was trying to learn:

That's me been playing along trying to sort out "Pretty Peggy" a bit, and I've got the rough gist of it, so I'll leave it and let it sink in. I find a tremendous difference if I sometimes -- just to find out the way something goes -- . . . leave it for twenty-four hours and then come back and play it again, and it seems to have subconsciously gone in.

This comment also relates to the fact that although Ken made some use of repetition in his practice as a means of improving tunes, he tended not to repeat things many times. Indeed, he maintained that he did not “favour endless repetition of tunes”.

### *Difficulties*

Fatigue was one factor which tended to hamper Ken’s practice. In the tape diary, for example, he said:

That’s the end of this morning’s practice at ten to nine. I’ve felt it’s been worthwhile; the first practice in a while I’ve felt worthwhile. Nice not to be tired. I think it makes a tremendous difference if I’m not tired. I seem to play better, or perhaps I’m less critical.

Lack of time in which to practise was another problem: “. . . time for some long overdue practice. Due to pressure of work I’ve not been able to get on the fiddle for nearly as long as I should.” Ken’s fiddle learning, then, was affected to some extent by outside factors such as work pressures and resulting tiredness, which inhibited the amount and the perceived quality of the practice undertaken.

### *Use of a tape recorder*

Like all the other learners with the exception of Roy, Ken brought a portable cassette recorder to the fiddle class each week in order to record material. During the period in which the study took place, Ken recorded solely the new tunes that were presented in class along with any commentary from the teacher that was connected to these. However, Ken indicated that, previously, he recorded the whole fiddle lesson from start to finish. Changes had taken place, then, with regard to what Ken actually chose to record.

Nonetheless, Ken continued to exploit these recordings to a considerable extent. He described how they were used in his practice:

Principally two things. If we haven't received the music in class I have to sit down with the tape and try and work out what the notes are. Eh, so I try and transcribe the music from the tape. Now, because I can't read music anyway, all I need -- all I'm transcribing is what the notes are, not their duration . . . I need to know which notes are in the tune to make sure that when I listen to it by ear and pick up the timing of the tune by ear, that I've got all the right notes in the right places. But in transcribing the tune from the tape I'm only gauging which notes are there, plus perhaps any subtleties in bowing or any technique points that the tutor's making. And the second thing is to remind myself what the tune actually is, and the timing of the tune, eh, 'cause frequently, having done a tune, I can go home and then not remember the next day how the tune went at all. But I find it usually quite easy to learn the tunes once I've sat and transcribed the music or if music's been provided [so] that, listening to the tape and seeing the notes, within about a week I can learn most tunes.

Thus, one way in which Ken used the recording was simply to remind him of a piece. The other rather intriguing way in which Ken used it, however, was as a basis from which to make his own written transcription of a tune. Such a transcription was made only if the sheet music for a tune was not available. Further, this transcription indicated the notes of the piece and not the rhythm. This suggests that, for Ken, the rhythm was more easily memorised and internalised than the melody.

Ken went into further detail about how he actually succeeded in making his transcriptions:

KC: How do you manage to transcribe the notes . . . ?

Ken: Really from just playing the tape into a set of headphones and going through and saying, first finger, open A, first finger.

KC: You're playing the fiddle at the same time, are you, when you're doing this?

Ken: I'm sometimes playing it or very often plucking the strings, so I'll do that, yeah, usually either with the bow or quite often plucking the strings.

Ken's description of how he transcribed a piece of music was consistent with the results of the tape diary in which there were many examples of him playing the fiddle pizzicato in order to work out the notes of the tune. Instances of this pizzicato playing may also be found on the CD.

He reflected on why he developed his transcription method and on why he began bringing the tape recorder to the fiddle class in the first place. This began in the second year of his attendance at ALP, where the group had a teacher who taught by ear:

Ken: I don't think in the first year I bothered having a portable tape recorder, but in the second it was quite apparent that, . . . because we weren't getting any music handed out, then the only way that I was going to be able to do any practice during the week was that I had a record of the tune, em, taped. Because I certainly couldn't remember ten minutes after the class had ended, very often, how the tune went at all. Em, . . . but to try and just play from the tape accompanying the tape, I certainly know I couldn't have done that, . . . so at that point I said, well, . . . to do any meaningful practice . . . I had to get a written form of the music. Sometimes that was available through music books or other people in the class having written versions in the books that they had, and we swapped copies, but often that wasn't available. So that was the point at which I had to sit down and transcribe the music and essentially when I was transcribing it, I was just transcribing . . . what the notes were

KC: And not the rhythm?

Ken: Not the duration or anything else or even keys -- whether it's flat or sharp. . . . all that I can really do is learn what the sequence of the notes is, and then from my memory of the tune -- from the tape version or from hearing it on the radio or wherever -- is then to try to emulate the note lengths and the pitch of the note, whether it's flat or sharp or whatever, in accordance with a memorised version



It is indeed interesting that Ken tried to *transcribe* pieces of music even although he maintained that he was not competent at reading music notation. This is something, after all, that even trained musicians, who can read music fluently, may find difficult. However, the fact that Ken was only “gauging” what the notes were, indicates that the end transcription was rather approximate, albeit individually tailored to his own needs. Ken’s type of transcription, then, may be described as a particular kind of prescriptive notation (Ellingson, 1992). A copy of one of his transcriptions appears in figure 5.3 overleaf.

Actually making these transcriptions, however, was not a simple matter. For instance, a particular source of confusion for Ken arose if the teacher made a mistake in teaching a tune; for example, by telling the class to use the second finger instead of the first. This relates to the fact that, in order to transcribe a piece, Ken was reliant as much on what the teacher said about the tune as on his own aural abilities:

What I find very disconcerting is if I’m playing with others and people play a different note or there’s one note out which I have found very often in these . . . hand-transcribed pieces of music, that sometimes people miss out a note or they put it in the wrong place and because I’ve memorised it, it leads me into a chasm of doubt and I think, am I wrong, or is everybody else wrong? Em, so I find it very frustrating if I’m trying to learn it and it’s written one way but it’s being taught another and I’m trying to figure out which is the way . . .

◀ The fact that Ken questioned whether he was wrong or the rest of the group was wrong in the differences that arose in the individual renditions of certain tunes, points to one of the trials of self-learning in a group context. It also points to the fact that Ken did not seem to be aware of the possibility that variants could exist in a tune. He viewed minor deviations between his own rendition of a tune and the teacher’s rendition as being mistakes on his part, rather than being credible as a potential or appropriate variant. This perspective may relate broadly to how individuals learn to

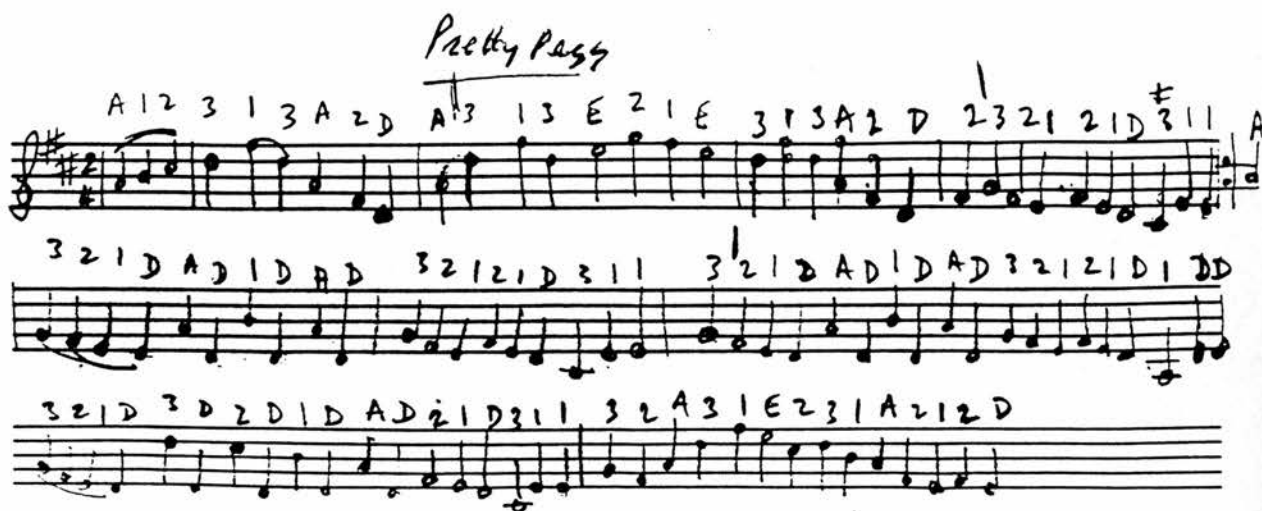


Figure 5.3 Ken's transcription of the tune "Pretty Peggy"

*The Shetland Fiddlers' Society Strathspey*

Ronald Cooper

Handwritten musical notation for the tune "The Shetland Fiddlers' Society Strathspey". The notation is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on the first staff, and the accompaniment is written on the second, third, and fourth staves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3 above or below notes. The title "The Shetland Fiddlers' Society Strathspey" is written above the first staff, and the composer's name "Ronald Cooper" is written to the right of the first staff.

Figure 5.4 "Learning by numbers": Fingerings added by Ken to the tune entitled "The Shetland Fiddlers' Society"

play traditional music in a formal setting. Learners may not be aware of the acceptability of different variants of a tune unless the teacher makes this explicit.

Moreover, several examples from the written diary showed just how tiring and frustrating transcribing material from cassette could be. In many ways, then, it was not ideal. For example, it might take Ken from around one hour, to an hour and a half, to transcribe the notes of a simple tune. In a written diary entry for the week beginning 29 April, he wrote:

Much time wasted (could have been practising properly) [Ken's brackets] in working out notation from tape on one tune "Pretty Peggy" as class version differs from printed version. Generally very tired when practising and sounded poor to me.

The following week was no better:

Not a good week for practice. Labouring without written music and generally very tired -- not conducive to practice.

Learning tunes for Ken, then, was a highly elaborate process which was influenced by the resources that were available. Without a printed copy of the music he was sometimes unable to rehearse tunes for the following week. The following sequence of extracts is quoted at length in order to illustrate the problems inherent in trying to learn a new tune. Some of these comments can also be heard on the CD (Item 6, example 2). Ken's description of learning in this section is often wryly humorous. To set the scene, he had made a tape recording of the tune "Pretty Peggy" in the fiddle class but had not received a written copy of the music from the teacher. By chance, he found a copy of the melody in a published collection of fiddle tunes:

It's, em, 10:10 [p.m.] on Tuesday 30th. I perhaps have been saved by finding a copy of "Pretty Peggy" in a fiddle book by Bill Hardie, so I'm going to try just picking out this tune now that I've got all the notes [from

the fiddle book] with the mute on . . . to save any disturbance in the house. . . . To try and work this tune out I am listening to . . . [the teacher's] tape and looking at the music to try and see if I can begin to get all the notes into my head . . . I'm listening to it on headphones and trying to pick out the tune on the fiddle, on mute, with my fingers, so again this is likely to be quite laborious.

After listening to the tape and looking at the sheet music he obtained he concluded:

. . . in the fourth bar of this tune as recorded by . . . [the teacher], it differs entirely from the music recorded in my written version, so I'll have to try and see how the two merge together . . .

[Ken has another attempt at the tune.]

It's about ten minutes later and I think I've managed to work out that . . . [the teacher's] version has a different ending in the first part to that which is written, so I'll have to transcribe this out in my own way to bring the two versions together, but it looks like the start of the second part is very much written as . . . [the teacher] played it, so we'll have a go at that.

Some time later that evening he said:

Hello Kath. It's now twenty-five to midnight, so I think I've finally got the notes for each tune sorted out between . . . [the teacher's] tape and, em, Bill Hardie's version. And I think Bill Hardie would turn in his grave if he could hear this one! Em, it seems to be quite an adulteration of the tune . . .

The problems of learning the tune "Pretty Peggy" did not end there. Several days later, Jim G. gave Ken a copy of the sheet music for "Pretty Peggy" which he had obtained. In a comment in the tape diary, Ken said:

Jim's been kind enough to drop off music that he's found for "Pretty Peg", so we'll see if it makes any more sense than what we've got already [tries the new music out on the fiddle]. Trying to work out the difference between the two versions . . . from the version I have from . . . [the teacher] and Jim's version. I think there must be a misprint in Jim's version from what I can see. So I'll stick with my own one . . . There appears to be significant differences between . . . [the teacher's] version, the version I have from Bill Hardie's book, and from the version that Jim's given me, which probably gets us back to the importance of

perhaps getting the music for the tune in the style that it's written or it's being taught by the teacher, or else different people in the class end up looking at different versions, eh, if they find printed copies in manuscript books, and we all end up playing basically slightly different tunes.

The conclusion to be drawn from this narrative is that Ken went to great lengths to obtain the "correct" notes of a tune. This sometimes involved looking at different versions and comparing and contrasting renditions of a tune. Further, as far as Ken was concerned, obtaining sheet music for a particular tune from the teacher made learning it much easier and avoided the confusion arising from using a variety of different sources.

### *Learning by numbers*

It has already been noted that, although Ken found difficulty in reading music, he needed to have the written music, or some form of it, in order to learn most tunes. However, it became apparent that when Ken actually learned a tune, he wrote the fingering above the stave so that he was actually *reading the numbers* and not the notes on the stave. An example of these "numbers" can be seen in the tune "The Shetland Fiddlers' Society" (Figure 5.4) which appears on page 191. In this example, Ken had written the number of the appropriate finger above every single note. He called this system *learning by numbers*. Ken talked about his preference for learning in this way:

I think my abilities have always been much more numerate than sort of artistic, . . . and so a learning system to me that's based on first finger, second finger, on a particular string, I find . . . a much more objective way of learning than looking at things linked by lines which I find subjective. . . . I've always been much better at objective things than subjective things. . .

A verbal illustration of the “learning by numbers” technique may be found on the CD (Item 6, example 1), where Ken is learning a tune called the “Macleans of Ugadale”. The fact that Ken found it easier and more logical to learn using a system which was based on numbers highlights the individual nature of learning; Ken used this system because it worked for *him*. These numbers represented a form of tablature in the sense that they showed how the tune was produced rather than how it sounded. Interestingly, too, the fact that Ken made up his own notation system for the musical stave which was based on numbers rather than lines and spaces, connects with the work of others who have documented similar strategies. Breathnach (1986:4), for example, notes that systems other than orthodox notation were used as teaching aids in fiddle and other traditional instrumental music in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

### *Learning tunes by ear*

Much of the discussion on Ken’s practice so far has been connected to the topic of learning and playing tunes by ear. He explained that the reason he did not learn tunes completely by ear was because he found it “difficult to tell if the notes are going up or down unless dramatically different.” Yet even although Ken found it difficult to learn tunes by ear he did value being able to play them in this way. This value was tied up with his conception of what represented competence in traditional fiddle playing. For instance, he made an informal comment to the researcher that as adults learning traditional music: “whatever else we are, we are part of a tradition.” Learning music by ear, then, was seen as an integral part of learning traditional music.

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<sup>1</sup> The present researcher also found that two beginning adult fiddle learners she taught at home had made up their own adaptations to the conventional system of music notation. Both mentioned that they thought about music in terms of codes. One “colour coded” the strings to be used on the sheet music using a felt tip pen and the other put fingerings above the stave and attached a number to each string. The latter thought about tunes in terms of “D1” and “A2”, for instance, instead of by the names of the individual notes or by the sound of the tune. Further, both marked out tunes in these various ways prior to learning them, indicating that they actually learned tunes via such annotations.

### *Summary*

Ken normally began his practice sessions by playing tunes with which he was familiar. His practice sessions varied in their length, and their duration was dependent on his mood and the amount of time that he had available. In the process of learning a new tune, Ken would often break into a familiar tune (an “old favourite”) to make learning new material easier. Another technique that Ken used in this same context was to leave the tune for a period of time and then to come back to it later on in a separate practice session. The content of Ken’s practice sessions was dictated to a large extent by the materials that were available to him. Generally, if Ken did not possess the sheet music for a particular tune, he listened to the tape recording he had made of the piece in the fiddle class and, from that, made his own transcription of the notes. However, the way in which Ken actually learned a tune was not from reading the music as such; rather it was from the numbers that he put above the stave which corresponded to various fingerings.

### **Reflections on the practice profiles**

Having elicited, thus far, a “thick description” of the practice sessions that each individual undertook, at this point it is necessary to outline and reflect upon common features and themes which have emerged from the reporting.

### *Format of the practice sessions*

The length of a single practice session varied widely amongst participants, from several minutes up to two and half hours. The amount of practice that each learner did on average was considerable, however, and broadly speaking, amounted to two hours per week, although this was often dependent on the amount of time that individuals were able to devote to learning the fiddle. There did not seem to be a common time of day for practising the fiddle amongst learners. However, practising



soon after the fiddle class was important for most, and a number of participants mentioned that their memory of a new tune that had been introduced in class tended to become more faint the longer they delayed practising the tune at home. The frequency of practice sessions also varied, although all the learners tried to practise regularly and several mentioned practising the fiddle almost every day. A number of learners mentioned that they fitted their fiddle practice around other activities. Roy, for example, would generally practise the fiddle before undertaking another pre-planned activity like going out in the evening. Indeed, the length and frequency of the practice sessions that learners undertook appeared to be dictated as much by outside factors, such as interruptions and having other activities to do, as by personal preference.

Practice sessions for most of the learners, as we have seen, usually took the form of a routine. Generally speaking, these routines unfolded in well-marked stages. Stage one was an orientation phase in which learners appeared to connect and identify with the instrument. During this period, individuals usually tuned their fiddles, and performed other rituals such as “picking up” the instrument, “dusting” it down and tightening the bow. The purpose of this preliminary stage appeared primarily to be to stimulate learners’ kinaesthetic senses. Indeed, the fact that the process of tuning the instrument was often rather approximate -- one learner, for instance, mentioned “rubbing” his fingers over the strings -- suggests that this act was undertaken as a form of sensori-motor behaviour, rather than simply as a way of determining whether or not the instrument was in tune. It is also possible that manipulating the instrument and bow in these various ways prior to the warm-up proper, symbolised the fact that the fiddle itself was meaningful to the learners.

Stage two of the practice session for each normally consisted of a warm-up. Indeed, the term “warm-up” was one which some of the participants used themselves to describe a particular phase of practising the fiddle at home. During the warm-up it was common for learners to play tunes that they liked or were comfortable with. Exercises such as scales were also performed briefly by some during this stage. Although certain individuals (e.g. Jim G. and Ken) were quite dependent on reading music in order to play tunes on the fiddle, in all cases the warm-up was usually conducted by ear.

The warm-up appeared to serve both as a mental and a physical preparation to the practice session: a mental preparation in that the ear became attuned to the sound of the fiddle, and a physical preparation in that some degree of mobility of the fingers of the left hand and the bowing arm was achieved. Performing a warm-up also seemed to prepare learners in a psychological sense, as it reminded learners of the competence level they had previously arrived at before tackling a new learning challenge, and thereby helped to increase their confidence.

The fact that learners performed a warm-up at the beginning of their practice sessions may relate to the format that the fiddle class generally assumed, where the teacher instructed learners to play familiar tunes at the start of the class before any new material was tackled. In addition, in the class session this material was almost always performed by ear. Thus, it is possible that the learners had transferred behaviour that they had learned in the fiddle class into the context of their practice sessions. However, it is important to note that, according to the researcher's observations during the pilot and core phases, no explicit guidance had been given to learners by those who taught the class about how to practise the fiddle at home.

Following the warm-up, stage three of the practice session began. This stage usually consisted of an attempt to learn any new tunes that had been introduced by the teacher at the most recent fiddle class. During this phase there were considerable variations amongst participants in how they approached material, especially in terms of their differing uses of the tape recorder (detailed below). It was also common for less familiar tunes which had been learned several months previously in the fiddle class to be revised in stage three. In certain cases this served as a conscious check that participants could still remember these pieces. Broadly, the functions of stage three were: 1) to learn new material, 2) to improve one's playing, 3) to revise older material, and 4) to keep pace with the other members in the class.

Like the warm-up phase, stage three bore a degree of resemblance to the typical format of the fiddle class where it was usual for the teacher to introduce new tunes at the lesson each week as well as to play through tunes that had been taught in lessons earlier on in the term, and especially those which appeared popular with learners.

Stage four represented the period in the practice sessions when learners frequently returned to "older" tunes which they liked or were familiar with. The function of returning to these "older" pieces was not to revise them; rather it was to facilitate learning a new tune. Interestingly, several learners had actually given this set of tunes labels such as "happier tunes" or "old favourites". The purpose of playing such familiar tunes was to help restore learners' confidence. Stage four also provided a period of intermission in the process of learning new material. As well as playing familiar tunes, two learners mentioned taking "breaks" in order to help them learn. Alison, for instance, took what she called a "mental break" in this context, and Ken deliberately left a tune he was trying to learn for a period of time in the hope that it would become absorbed subconsciously.

Following stage four, participants commonly returned to stage two activities for a period. This represented the fifth stage of the practice session. Indeed, cycles of stages four and five could take place a number of times before learners arrived at stage six, the conclusion of the practice session. Stage six, however, could in fact take place at any time and was dependent on how well learners thought the practice session was going. For example, some mentioned that they might quit practising after the warm-up if they felt that it had been unsuccessful. Moving on to stage six appeared to be brought about by a variety of factors. These could be either positive, e.g. feeling that some kind of achievement had been made; or negative, e.g. feeling that the practice session was not going well, feeling tired or having something else to do.

A table representing the typical format of home practice sessions for these adult learners appears overleaf in figure 5.5. It draws on the findings presented in this section, and summarises the stages that were generally evident in each of the learner's practice sessions. It must be stressed, however, that this summary represents the researcher's own analyses of the data on practice, and also that it shows the stages which were apparent in the practice of each in a general and rather idealised way.

### *Approach to learning*

This chapter has also shown that the six adult learners were methodical in terms of the strategies they employed to learn the fiddle. In fact, each learner had devised what this researcher considers to be their own "system of learning" -- a way of learning that suited their individual needs. These systems of learning involved, for instance, the varying uses of technology and sheet music, as well as the use of the lists and the transcriptions. They had evolved during the period in which participants

**Figure 5.5 Table showing typical format of home practice**

	Activity	Process	Purpose
<b>Stage 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• connect with the instrument</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• tune the fiddle</li><li>• tighten the bow</li><li>• “dust” the fiddle down</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• stimulate kinaesthetic senses</li></ul>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• warm-up</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• play familiar tunes or exercises, by ear</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• physiological/psychological preparation to learning new tunes</li></ul>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learn new tunes</li></ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• revise “older” tunes that are not so familiar</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use the tape recorder</li><li>• use sheet music</li><li>• play by ear</li><li>• use a combination of the above three methods</li></ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as above</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• expand repertoire</li><li>• improve skills</li><li>• keep up with the others in the class</li></ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• check that “older” tunes can still be remembered</li></ul>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• return to familiar material (e.g. “happier tunes”)</li><li>• take a mental break</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• by ear</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• restore confidence</li><li>• relieve difficulties of learning a new tune</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as above</li></ul>
<b>Stage 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• return to learning new tunes</li></ul>	as Stage 3	as Stage 3
<b>Stage 6</b>	End of practice session due to tiredness, lack of time, the practice session not going well, or feeling that some kind of achievement had been made. This stage could happen at any time.		

had been learning the instrument, and represented, for each, the most effective way that they had found of approaching the task of learning.

The primary way in which participants tried to improve their fiddle playing was through playing *tunes* rather than scales or other exercises, although some learners, for example Alison, did make use of such devices. The fact that Alison, for one, did make use of these may be related to the fact that she had a background in classical music prior to beginning the fiddle (having received violin lessons for a period whilst living in England), something which was not characteristic of the other students. By playing tunes as their primary approach to learning the fiddle, then, the experiences of these adult learners connect with those of unschooled fiddlers who learned within the context of a family or community group in the past in Scotland (see, for instance, Cooke, 1986). The latter learned their skills largely through playing tunes rather than scales or exercises. Further, the fact that most fiddle players generally do not make much use of exercises is perhaps not surprising given that the majority of fiddle tunes are concentrated around first position on the instrument, unlike classical violin pieces, for example.

The technique of repetition was also used quite extensively by learners in the present study. However, there were variations in how much individuals repeated material. For instance, whereas Alison tended to repeat phrases or bars many times in order to improve part of the tune or the whole tune, and would often concentrate on one tune per practice session, Roy tended to play at least ten tunes in one session and would rarely play each more than once. However, he would return to these tunes again in another separate session at a later date. This seemed to help avoid the practice session becoming monotonous. The fact that most learners did use repetition as a

learning device is suited to the idiom of traditional music, where it is usual for tunes to be constructed from recurrent bars and phrases.

### *The role of technology*

Technology (e.g. the tape recorder and also in Jim G's case, the computer) played a significant role in the learners' practice sessions. All, with the exception of Roy (although he had done so in the past), brought a portable tape recorder to the fiddle class in order to record material from the lesson. However, whilst most of the students employed a tape recorder to help them learn the fiddle, they varied significantly in their use of it in a number of ways.

Firstly, whilst some such as Andy and Ken recorded either the whole or the best part of the two hour fiddle lesson, including both the tunes and spoken dialogue from the teacher, others, who were more selective, recorded only the new tunes that the teacher presented. Thus, there were differences in what learners chose to record in the fiddle class as well as in the amount of material that they recorded.

Secondly, participants varied in the ways and extent to which they used their tape recordings to help them learn the fiddle at home. For example, whereas Jim G. would only refer to the recording he had made as a "back-up" if he did not have the sheet music for a particular tune, to Andy the tape recorder represented the primary means of learning repertoire. Andy used the tape as a way of repeating the entire fiddle lesson again at home, and, in doing so, played the fiddle in accompaniment to the tape. Probably the most creative use of the tape recorder, however, came from Ken. If Ken did not possess sheet music for a particular tune but had made a recording of the teacher playing that tune, he would use the recording as a basis for making his own written transcription of the piece. His transcription, as we have seen,



consisted only of the note heads on the stave with the number of the appropriate finger written above it; there was little or no indication of the rhythm of the tune. The fact that Ken made a transcription of the tune was especially surprising because he claimed that he was not able to read music very well.

Notwithstanding these differences in the use of the tape recorder detailed above, the tape recorder was most commonly used as a way of helping students to *remember* tunes. Thus, several of the participants mentioned the problem of apparently having learned a new tune in the fiddle class on a monday evening, only to find they had completely forgotten it the following day. Another function of these tapes for some was that it allowed them to hear the *style* in which the teacher played a particular tune.

Thirdly, participants varied in what they did with these tape recordings after their immediate use in the practice sessions. For instance, whereas Jim G. recorded over the proceedings of each fiddle class from one week to the next, indicating that the material on the tape was for short-term use only, Andy stored each new tune on one separate tape and was building up a permanent collection of these recordings -- which he referred to as his "wee archive".

There was also a dynamic aspect to the role of technology in the learning process, as participants indicated that the ways in which they used the tape recorder had changed during the time that they had been learning the fiddle. The most obvious example of this was Roy who, as we have seen, no longer made recordings of the teacher's playing because of the difficulties he associated with the practical usage of the tape. Andy also mentioned that in the early stages of his learning he would re-record a new tune around five times in sequence on a separate cassette in order to hear the tune

repeatedly, in effect, creating a “tape loop”. As he became more competent, however, he found that he did not need to do this so often. This use of the tape recorder is also a good example of how a two-way recording medium (i.e. incorporating record and playback) provides a medium of control. In other words, the machine was employed in a creative way and was not simply used to play back material pre-recorded by someone else, as on a CD.

Overall then, there was a good deal of contrast amongst learners in how the tapes were employed. They were used as a way of reminding them of a tune, as an aid to *retrieving* a tune (e.g. Alison’s description of the tape as helping to “jog” the memory), as a reminder of the teacher’s *playing* of the tune, as a basis from which to make a transcription, and as a means of repeating the fiddle class once again. The finding of such variation is significant as, although it is well known amongst scholars of traditional music that the tape recorder is used by learners to assist in the learning process, much less is known about *how* learners make use of this device.

#### *Learning by ear and the use of written music*

Another way in which the six participants exhibited variety in their approach to learning repertoire was whether they tried to learn tunes by ear, or through the use of written notation, or through a combination of both. In addition, a distinction needs to be made here between *learning* and *playing* tunes by ear as, in certain cases, even though participants did not *learn* a tune by ear, they had the intention of being able to eventually *play* it without the use of notation. Indeed, a rather complex picture emerged in this context of how the learners actually approached the task of learning. Whereas Jim M., Andy, Alison and Roy had few problems in learning and playing tunes by ear, Ken and Jim G. found this to be considerably more difficult. However, whilst Ken and Jim G. maintained that they had problems in learning tunes by ear, it

was still their goal to be able to do so. Playing and learning tunes by ear was something that was valued by all of the six the participants and was a topic about which they had strong views.

One explanation for the value that learners attached to playing by ear, as we have seen, was that certain participants viewed themselves as being part of a tradition of fiddle playing in Scotland that had been carried on for centuries, within which fiddle tunes had been learned by ear. Thus, participants felt obliged to carry on past practices. Their attraction to learning and playing by ear may also be related to what might be called the “politics of literacy”: in wishing to learn tunes aurally, they may have been making a conscious rejection of the more formal tutored approach characteristic of European classical music and indeed of the kind of music education they may have received in school music lessons. Alison’s comments about being dissuaded from learning by ear in piano lessons she attended as a child particularly reinforce this last point. Furthermore, the learners’ apparent rejection of written music may be related to the general ethos of the Adult Learning Project where learning by ear was strongly advocated.

Another reason for the desire to play tunes by ear for some was that they felt it a “better” or more “musical” way to learn than from reading written notation. This comment may point up the inadequacies of written notation generally in capturing ornamentation and other nuances of playing style, as well as being a way of justifying this earlier approach to themselves. The various tutors that the learners had been taught by at ALP may also have been an influence on their beliefs in this respect, as some of the tutors were themselves not fluent at reading written music, and hence tended to espouse both the benefits of learning by ear as well as teaching in this way.

The awareness of some of the adults of what might be termed the “role models” of fiddle playing (e.g. media personalities such as Alasdair Fraser or Aly Bain) may also have had an influence here. Most of the learners had seen fiddlers such as these perform in a live context or on television or video, and would most probably have been conscious of the fact that they seldom used written music. It seems likely that students might have wished to copy the behaviour of such individuals.

The reason, however, why some participants found it relatively easy to learn and play tunes by ear whereas others found the opposite to be the case, is more difficult to explain. One answer may lie in the participants’ background and involvement in music. The fact that Ken and Andy, the two learners who had no experience of learning a musical instrument prior to attending the fiddle class, both found difficulty in learning by ear, especially in the early stages of learning the instrument (although Andy had managed to overcome his problems), points up this possibility.

Confidence may have been another factor that affected whether or not learners were able to play by ear. Ken, for instance, felt that he lacked innate musical ability. Other learners, too, generally lacked confidence and self-esteem. These opinions may themselves have hindered the learning process. It is quite possible, however, that such beliefs may be bound up with previous negative learning experiences. In this connection Sloboda notes:

Specific learning difficulties are often tied up with previous bad experiences which have dented a person's confidence in that area. When a person claims that they are hopeless at maths, aural, or whatever it might be, you can be sure that something happened to make it that way. There is usually some experience of invalidation or ridicule or straightforward fear. (1987:31)

Another explanation for the difficulty that certain students appeared to have in learning tunes by ear may be that some (e.g. Jim G.) were already accustomed to learning pieces from written music prior to attending classes, and were happy to continue learning in this way. Indeed, this point highlights that, although all the learners were participants in an intermediate standard fiddle class, the musical skills that each possessed varied considerably. Further, this may be indicative of one problem generally of learning in a group context; namely, that although the standard of the class may be specified by an organisation, individuals of differing experience and competence will inevitably join the group. This seems especially true where no testing is required for entry.

The quantity of tunes that were taught in the fiddle class may also have been unhelpful to students who were learning tunes by ear. In a typical session of the class, for example, learners were given two new tunes to learn, but sometimes this number rose to three or four. It was customary, too, for these tunes to be revised only briefly the following week. This may have represented too short a period for students to learn tunes adequately.

The fact that participants appeared to favour differing ways of learning tunes, i.e. some preferred to learn by ear whereas others preferred to use written music, also raises the issue of learning modes as outlined by Campbell, who states:

Visual learners learn by seeing, reading notation, and observing demonstrations by others. Those who are auditory learners benefit from verbal instructions and from musical examples presented by the teacher, another student, or recordings. Kinesthetic learners develop knowledge and skills by feeling, participating, and becoming directly involved with music in a physical way. (1991:90)

The categories of visual and auditory learners, indicated by the above statement, appeared to be highlighted by the learners in the present study. For instance, Ken and Jim G. might be thought of as being primarily visual learners as a result of their reliance on various forms of written notation, whereas the others in the class (e.g. Jim M. and Andy) more closely resembled the category of auditory learners. A further plausible reason why Ken and Jim G. preferred to learn from written music, however, is that it may have represented a form of psychological security for them.

However, despite the fact that participants appeared to prefer different modes of learning, this investigation found that very few of the learners relied *exclusively* on one mode in order to learn tunes. Rather, in most cases learning was achieved through using a *combination* of modes. For instance, although Roy was proficient at learning tunes by ear, he preferred to learn tunes from written notation as this represented a more efficient way of learning tunes for him. Alison, too, had an “ideal way” of learning which included hearing a piece of music repeatedly and then loosely following the notes of the tune via sheet music.

#### *Cognitive storage and retrieval of tunes*

Data presented from the practice sessions in this chapter have also shown that learners had differing cognitive ways of storing material. Ken, for example, appeared to try to remember tunes by the position of his fingers, i.e. by how tunes were produced, rather than by how they actually sounded. The fact that he did so also shows that he presumably constructed images of tunes in his mind in quite a complex way. Further, there was clearly a linkage for Ken between the practical means of producing tunes (e.g. the fingering) and knowing what tunes sounded like.

Another aspect of Ken's learning was that he tried to remember every single note of the piece instead of remembering the overall contour of the tune. Playing one note "incorrectly" could confuse him to the extent that he would not be able to play the rest of the piece. Most of the other learners who could play tunes by ear, however, (e.g. Jim M., Alison and Roy) seemed to have an overall image of the tune. They thought more in terms of its phrases rather than its individual notes. It could be said, then, that Ken, appeared to have a more internal view of the tune than the other learners. This finding is significant given what we know about how music is remembered. Dowling and Harwood put it simply:

The role of memory in hearing a piece of music is somewhat like the role of memory in listening to a conversation. . . . Usually, one comes away from a conversation with a knowledge of its overall meaning but with little exact recollection of details. (1986:163)

It is the broad contour of a piece of music that is generally remembered rather than each note of it, then. This, in aural traditions, accounts for allowable variation which Ken clearly had difficulty in assimilating. Indeed, the fact that Ken tried to remember tunes in terms of their individual notes may partially explain why he had problems in memorising tunes and playing them by ear.

As well as having different cognitive ways of storing material, the learners also appeared to have contrasting ways of retrieving tunes from their aural memories. These included listening to tape recordings of tunes briefly, and trying to remember a particular phrase in a tune without referring to either a tape recording or written music. Seeing the first few notes of a tune that he already knew on the printed page was also helpful to Andy, for instance, (although he could not read music particularly well) in this context. This suggests that written music was useful to certain



individuals in terms of actually helping them to retrieve material from memory as opposed to simply remembering pieces.

### *The experience of learning as an adult*

Several findings of the core investigation reported in this chapter relate specifically to the experience of learning the fiddle as an adult. Whilst the participants in this study were all highly motivated in terms of their fiddle playing, data from the profiles suggest that learning to play the instrument was not easy because of the number of other commitments which competed for their time. Jim M., for example, in addition to learning the fiddle, was studying for an Open University course in order to gain further qualifications, was helping to raise a young family and was holding down a full-time job.

Further, although the participants generally enjoyed their practice sessions simply because it was time that they had to themselves in which they were doing something *for* themselves, they often found practising the fiddle to be highly frustrating especially when they felt that they were making little progress. The difficulties of learning to play the instrument were noted in Chapter Four, but this theme was further highlighted in the present chapter as a result of the information obtained from the tape diary and the written diary. One reason why they experienced such frustration was that they wished to become good fiddle players *quickly*. It appears that some were conscious of the fact that they had not begun learning the instrument in childhood and as a result were consciously trying to “make up for lost time”.

In addition, the very fact that these students were learning as *adults* may have exacerbated their need to make rapid progress. For instance, whereas it is common in Western society for a child to begin a musical instrument at the age of five and carry

on learning it to the age of fifteen -- and consequently to spend ten years receiving lessons -- to that child this may not *seem* like a long period, because 1) a child learner may not feel the passage of time or look ahead like an adult learner; 2) a child learner is concurrently undertaking education at school and may view learning an instrument as an extension of his or her activities in the school classroom; and 3) a child may not be particularly conscious of learning as a significant developmental activity. For the adult learner, however, a similar amount of time may *appear* longer because of 1) the awareness adults have of ageing, 2) the commitments and responsibilities they have which compete for their time and 3) the greater awareness that they have of the learning process and its relevance to self-development. For example, one learner in this study was beginning to wonder after only three years of learning how long it would take him to become a competent fiddler. Thus, it is probable that adult learners will have differing perspectives about the importance of *time* compared to those of child learners. This point is also borne out by Knowles (1980).

The six adult participants also demonstrated high levels of self-awareness. They had the ability to analyse their own playing and to make fairly sophisticated judgements about problems they were having, for example, with intonation and co-ordination. They also had the ability to suggest elements which might make the learning process easier for them. For instance, most felt that, rather than simply learning tunes, they needed to work on aspects of their style and technique to a greater extent. As well as being self-aware, these learners were also self-critical. Indeed, this chapter has shown the extent to which these learners were constantly engaged in evaluating their own playing skills.

Part of this self-awareness and the tendency to be self-critical may have emerged from the comparison that each learner made with his or her peers. Students were

aware of the actions of other individuals in the class in terms of, for example, how competent they felt their contemporaries were at playing by ear and how quickly they were able to learn tunes. They measured their own progress, to some extent, by making such comparisons.

Another factor that might have contributed to these learners being self-critical and self-aware was the fact that they had received little direct feedback from their various tutors at the ALP fiddle class. In learning in the group situation, the responsibility for monitoring and revising material lay principally with the learners rather than the teacher. Further, the teacher was normally unable to comment specifically on the progress that an individual had made over a certain period of time because of the number of learners in the class.

Participants also had a need to constantly restore and augment their confidence. Most, as we have seen in this chapter and in Chapter Four, appeared to frequently pass through phases of self-doubt. For instance, some wondered how long it would take them to become competent players, few thought they were capable of playing another form of music (e.g. classical music or jazz), and some doubted their own talents and abilities. Furthermore, a good deal of the behaviour that the learners exhibited suggested that learners frequently sought *security* during the learning process. For example, playing familiar material (i.e. the “old favourites” or “happier tunes”) served the function of restoring the learners’ confidence and helping them feel secure. In addition, most of the participants preferred learning in a group and playing in a group situation in public, as opposed to learning on their own and performing solo to an audience.

It is also interesting that, although participants had devised various methods to help them learn tunes through innovation and experimentation, once they found a solution to a problem they tended to continue using it. Thus, there appeared to be a balance arrived at between strategic thinking and the need for security.

These particular adults also *helped each other* in a number of ways. Indeed, learning together in the class environment was important not only in a social sense, but also because of the actual practical support learners offered each other in and out of the fiddle class. Instances of this kind of support included sharing ideas with others that had worked for them (e.g. the lists of tunes), as well as sharing any sheet music for tunes that they had managed to obtain. In this way, then, learners had an influence to some extent on the practice that others in the class did at home.

Although learners in the group did help each other, however, it was interesting how individually-oriented they were in terms of their behaviour. Indeed, each had their own *individual learning style*, which centred round the use of the tape recorder, written music and learning by ear, for example, and which differed in detail from the approach of other class members. Furthermore, perhaps the real individuality of each lay in the *solutions* that they found to problems. The ways in which learners managed to acquire sheet music for tunes (e.g. visiting the Music Library and making transcriptions), for instance, represented two quite diverse strategies to solving the same difficulty.

### *Learner behaviour*

Four other significant points concerning the behaviour of participants as learners emerge from the findings of this chapter. First, a number of participants attached *labels* to elements connected to the learning process. Terms such as “wee archive”,

“mental break”, “old favourites” and “happier tunes” were all examples of this. Such labelling suggests 1) that these elements were important from the point of view of individuals, and 2) that there was a significant level of awareness of the learning process amongst learners.

Second, certain participants also tried to create a learning environment for themselves. Some of the learners, for example, mentioned 1) hanging the fiddle on the wall at home, 2) having a specific time and place in the home where practising took place, and 3) organising materials to help them learn (e.g. Andy’s “wee archive”). Thus, these students had attempted to create a personal space for learning and had tried to allocate also, as far as possible, a specific time in which learning would take place.

Third, certain of the learners had also devised ways to help them learn the fiddle which were linked to their professions. This points up the extent to which previous experience is important in one’s current learning activities. Roy, for example, maintained that the fact that he had devised the lists of tunes he could and could not play by ear was related to the fact that he was an accountant. Jim G.’s use of a computer to help him learn fiddle tunes may be linked to the fact that his profession is one which was concerned with the operation of computers. In Ken’s case, the fact that he felt that his abilities were more numerate than artistic, reflected in this numbering system, may be related to his scientific background and his occupation of a veterinary surgeon.

Fourth, targets and goals also were also important to the adults. Most of the learners had set their own goals -- e.g. memorising material, playing outside the context of the fiddle classes, and playing tunes by ear -- which went beyond the requirements of the

class. In this respect, students were self-directing. They took charge of their own learning and were not dependent on the teacher of the class for direction or support.

### **Summary of Chapter Five**

This chapter has examined the home practice sessions of each of the six learners. It found that patterns of learning at home generally followed a routine which unfolded in stages. These stages included a preliminary phase where learners familiarised themselves with the instrument, a warm-up phase where familiar tunes were often played, and a third phase where new tunes were attempted and older tunes were revised. Further, learners often played familiar tunes in the process of learning a new tune as a way of restoring their confidence.

Chapter Five has also shown that participants varied in how they preferred to learn material -- whether by ear or by using written music, or more often by using a combination of the two. The reasons for these preferences appeared to be linked to factors such as personal learning style and which method represented the most direct way of learning. Indeed, although all the participants were or had been learning in the same fiddle group, they exhibited a wide variety of individual learning strategies. The diversity in how they employed technology was a notable example of this.

A number of themes relating to the fact that these learners were adults were also identified in this chapter. These included: 1) that the six adult learners sought security in the learning process, 2) that their current learning approaches appeared to be linked to the previous learning experiences and professional life, 3) that students felt the need to make rapid progress and 4) that they were self-aware and self-critical of their learning efforts.

The implications arising from these findings are discussed in Chapter Six.

## CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses some key implications that arise from this work. In particular, it draws on the findings from the Edinburgh field study, documented in the previous two chapters. Implications exist on both theoretical and practical levels and are discussed in the context of each of the following areas:

- conceptual understanding in ethnomusicology
- adult music education
- the tuition of traditional music

At the end of each of these sections, some tentative suggestions are made about topics that might profitably be pursued in further research.

### **Conceptual understanding in ethnomusicology**

There are two concepts in particular for which this investigation has significant implications, namely “transmission” and “practice”. These are discussed in turn. Firstly, implications arise for: our understanding of transmission in a teacher-pupil sense; the concept of units of transmission; oral and written transmission; and the contexts in which transmission occurs. Secondly, implications arise for: our use and definition of the term practice; the future study of practice in the light of the summary table of home practice exhibited in the last chapter; and the methods that are used to study practice.

#### *Transmission*

In Chapter Two the concept of transmission, frequently referred to in the ethnomusicological literature relating to the teaching and learning of music, was



critically reviewed. It was noted that transmission has for a long time been one of the dominant ideas in both ethnomusicology and in other disciplines, and that it has come to be used in broadly two different ways: first, as a way of describing an explicit process involved in teaching and learning; second as a means of explaining the continuance of traditions. Furthermore, transmission has also had a major influence on the study of teaching and learning of music, since researchers have been approaching various kinds of teaching and learning environments informed by this concept (e.g. Veblen, 1991; and Booth, 1986).

From the review of some of the key literature about transmission, several trends were identified in prior research. One was that a focus of much previous investigation had been on the product rather than the process. As a result, in research on traditional music especially, greater stress had been given to the study of the *repertoire* that was learned rather than *how* that repertoire was actually learned. Another was that little detailed attention had been given to the study of instances of individual learning behaviours. Rather, the focus of study had generally been on a community or group who were often viewed as a homogenous unit. It was also apparent in this repertoire-oriented literature that the locus of investigation was more often on the teacher than those learning. The teacher was frequently viewed as a “transmitter” (Campbell, 1991) with students being viewed as, or assumed to be, mere passive subjects in the process.

Given the critiques of transmission by Adler (1980), Knowles (1980) and Nicol (1997) presented in Chapter Two, the position adopted by the present author is that whilst transmission is a useful concept to describe in a broad sense how traditions are passed on, its use in the more specific sense to describe and render learning as a transfer of information from teacher to pupil is problematic. Indeed, it was

contended in Chapter Two that there were particular difficulties with the assumption that information can be *transferred* from one person to another, especially in the light of some of the recent work undertaken in the field of adult education (Knowles, 1980). Moreover, the results from the present field study lend further weight to the proposition that the notion of transmission in the teacher-pupil context needs to be revised.

First, the fact that a “good teacher” to the learners was an individual who could motivate and inspire the learning process has implications here. Their perceptions of what the teacher should be like did not correspond with the traditional authoritarian model of the teacher enshrined in the notion of transmission which suggests that the primary function of the teacher is as a transmitter of information. Instead, these learners placed relatively little importance on *what* the teacher taught or even on the teacher’s standard of playing. It was the human qualities of the teacher, such as their personality as an individual, their willingness to relate to their learners’ needs, and their ability to explain things in different ways, that appeared to be the primary qualities of the good teacher that mattered to them.

Indeed, the learners’ perceptions of what constituted good teaching practice also has implications for the concept of the “master teacher”. This term often appears in ethnomusicological writings, yet researchers seldom make explicit what they mean by it. Is such an individual considered to be a master by the researcher, by their peers, or by those whom they teach? Is it someone who has taught for a long time? An accomplished musician? A figure of authority? Someone who exerts discipline? Someone who can technically help those who are learning? A musician who has an extensive knowledge of a particular repertory? Or a tradition bearer? Although what

constitutes a master teacher is surely culture-specific, this concept, like transmission, also needs more refined definition.

Second, the learning process pursued by each member in this investigation was influenced to some extent by their colleagues in the fiddle class. Here, the influences that group members had upon each other were manifested in the following ways:

- learners met each other outside classes in a musical capacity and played in sessions
- learners shared their experiences of learning and the methods they had discovered which could ease the learning process, e.g. the lists of tunes maintained by Roy and Jim G.
- individuals offered support to each other by helping each other in a practical sense, e.g. to obtain sheet music
- the interaction between learners helped to inspire the learning process and enhanced their motivation

The existing transmission model, however, presupposes almost exclusively an interaction between the teacher and pupil even in a group learning situation; it does not explicitly account for the fact that peers in the group may also be key influences on the learning of each other.

Third, we saw in Chapters Four and Five just how central practice was to the participants in this study. Indeed, this was considered by all to be fundamental to learning and was an activity on which each expended a considerable amount of time. Hitherto, however, the transmission model tacitly implied an almost immediate transfer of skills from teacher to pupil and also that the outcomes of a student's learning was dependent on the teacher. It did not appear to account for the extensive and detailed practice that a student has to undertake in order to acquire a skill.

Fourth, the essentially individual nature of the learning process is another reason why the transmission concept is problematic. This study of six adult learners showed just how unique individuals were in terms of how they learned. Each had developed a preferred way of learning and, even though all attended or had attended the same fiddle class, their solutions to commonly experienced problems were different. Transmission, as used in contexts where a teacher addresses a group, however, implies a uniformity of approach amongst learners, and suggests that each follows and reacts to information from the teacher in much the same way. According to the core investigation, however, this was not the case.

Furthermore, also at variance with the findings of the Edinburgh field study is the simplicity of the transmission model with its inherent assumption that information can be “passed on” from teacher to pupil. Examples from this investigation, however, showed that it was quite common for the teacher to introduce a new tune in the fiddle class but for the students not to remember the tune at all the following day. What does this say about the robustness of the idea that learning is achieved by transmission? Had anything been “passed on” at the fiddle class? Had students simply “forgotten” the tune? The evidence that it could take a student weeks to learn a piece and that many repeated hearings of a tune might be needed to learn it, and that, even then, participants may still not be able to play the tune, again underlines the difficulties inherent in the transmission concept.

In addition, the existing transmission model which suggests that those learning are passive receivers of information is also at odds with the findings of this investigation which showed that the participants were active throughout the learning process, both in finding solutions to problems and in devising methods to aid their learning (e.g. the transcriptions, lists of tunes, the tape recorder and the computer).

## Units of transmission

Data from the Edinburgh study also has implications for the idea of “units of transmission”. Bohlman discusses this concept in the context of oral transmission:

The largest unit in the oral transmission of folk music is the piece -- the song, the dance, that musical entity to which a culture ascribes a specific name. The piece of music usually contains internal mnemonic devices, but its total form also serves as a unit in transmission. (1988:15)

The present research showed, however, that such units of transmission are variously recognised and defined and vary from individual to individual. For example, as we saw in Chapter Five, whereas Jim M. appeared to view the overall piece as being “the unit”, to Ken each *note* of the tune seemed to constitute a unit. It is likely, too, that what constitutes a unit will vary at different stages of the learning process for different individuals.

Furthermore, whereas units of transmission have often been thought of as being tunes or other large-scale named units, this study demonstrated, especially in terms of the individual strategies that learners employed, that they were trying to engage with the actual grammar of the tune -- the ornamentation, phrases, notes and bowing -- and were not just simply trying to remember repertoire. The notion of there being a unit of transmission which has a set form and structure which can be passed on from one person to another in the oral transmission of music is thus problematic.

Another difficulty here is that, if units can be handed on from one agent to another in such a way, how do we account for variation and change in pieces of music? The highly influential work begun by Milman Parry and continued by Albert B. Lord on the Yugoslav and Homeric epics (Lord, 1960) famously came across this very problem. One difficulty that they faced was to explain how these very lengthy

“songs” were learned and memorised by performers. The solution they arrived at was that the epics were not being passed on exactly from one person to another as had been presupposed. Instead, performers were actively composing their repertoire afresh based on internal mnemonic formulae (Adler, 1980).

A further relevant point here is that some scholars for a long time have viewed musical “variants” as by-products of the transmission process and often as accidental and even corrupting. These were often seen as mistakes rather than as acts of individual creativity or intentionality. The present study, however, highlighted the problems that students had in internalising musical forms and structures, as well as how these individuals processed musical information. It also gave an insight into how variation and change can be introduced into repertoire. For instance, although the primary aim of individuals was generally to reproduce tunes as the teacher had taught and played them in class, learners were also re-creating them for themselves. One learner, Jim M., for example, who played tunes mainly by ear, sometimes could not remember how a tune finished and consequently made up his own ending. This sometimes resulted in Jim M. playing a slightly different version of a tune from that of the teacher.

#### Oral and written transmission

This field study has also shed further light on the concepts of oral and written transmission. Whereas scholars have frequently considered these as distinct entities which have little or no overlap and interchange (e.g. Darbellay, 1986), the results of this investigation demonstrated that learners employed oral and written sources interchangeably. Indeed, as we have seen, the ways in which most of them learned tunes involved using a combination of the two. This was dependent partly on which mode or combination of modes represented the easiest as well as the most convenient

way of learning tunes for each participant. The present investigation, then, has highlighted the fact that both these forms can and do coexist. This is significant given that Finnegan (1986:73) underlines the need to look at the actual practice of active music making in order to highlight the specific ways in which oral and literate elements are used in differing forms of music.

#### Formal and informal transmission

Throughout this investigation, the distinction outlined by Greenfield and Lave (1982) between the idealised characteristics of formal and informal education has been used to differentiate between the various contexts in which the fiddle can be learned. According to these two authors, the characteristics of formal education include that it is set apart from everyday life; there is a teacher who is responsible for imparting knowledge and skill; the teacher is not usually a relative and there is also an explicit pedagogy and curriculum. Informal education, however, implies that the learning is embedded in daily life activities; the learner is responsible for obtaining knowledge and skill; relatives can be appropriate teachers and there is little or no explicit pedagogy or curriculum.

However, the present field study demonstrated that the use of the terms “formal” and “informal” in an educational context may not be wholly straightforward. For example, although the education at ALP was formal in the sense that classes were organised at a set time and in a set place and were conducted by individuals termed “teachers”, there were several ways in which it was informal. First, it might be considered to be informal in a colloquial sense because ALP lay outside the formal educational system. Second, the teaching and learning may have appeared informal from the learners’ point of view because there were no explicit syllabus or examinations connected with the group. Third, a relaxed approach was taken to



teaching by the tutors rather than a strictly disciplined one. Fourth, many aspects of the group were not structured -- technique, for instance, was not usually explicitly taught by most teachers. Finally, learners considered traditional music itself to be informal compared to, for instance, classical music. Indeed, broadly speaking, it was the actual *informality* of the class which appeared to be attractive to a number of participants. It is interesting to note, however, that whilst informality may *appear* to be a characteristic of traditional music performance, the settings in which traditional music is performed are often rule-governed to some degree. MacKinnon (1993:79), for instance, observes: "In the folk clubs 'structured informality', the articulation of apparent informality, is tightly bound by a series of mores and expectations as to how to behave." The points presented in this section, then, show that the boundaries between formal and informal learning situations may not be distinct. As a result, adequately defining the different contexts in which teaching and learning occurs is problematic.

#### Transmission: Summary

The previous discussion has considered the transmission concept in the light of the findings from the field study. Particular attention has been paid to the use of transmission in the teacher-pupil context. It has been suggested that it could be timely and helpful to revisit the transmission concept with a view to clarifying its meaning in the light of our increasingly detailed understanding of learning processes. The transmission model has emerged from what nowadays might be regarded as a rather traditional view of teaching and learning, in which learning was seen largely as a process of building up a knowledge store of facts or skills and procedures, which appeared to be passed on from one agent to another by demonstration or verbal delivery in an unspecified way. In this view, the teacher was often viewed as a master, or figure of authority.

Further, such perceptions of the transmission concept are rooted in a historical tradition which did not include detailed investigation into what actually happened to learners during and after their exposure to the teacher. Historically, we simply do not know what learners did following one “demonstration” by a tutor. For instance, in the context of traditional music learning, we know little about how individuals reacted to information from the teacher, how much practice they did, and how long it took them to learn tunes.

In the twentieth century, however, our understanding of learning has changed. Learning is now viewed as more than the acquisition of facts and in the case of music, as being about more than just the acquisition of repertoire. Also, we now have more refined insights into the processes of teaching and learning. For example, we know that learners are active during the learning process rather than passive. Indeed, the constructivist position, which is now a dominant one in a number of educational fields, indicates that learning is about much more than simply receiving information from the teacher, and involves a process whereby individuals use their existing understanding to construct new thinking (Watson, 1998). Further, recent constructivist theories emphasise the social element in learning: in any group learning situation, members of the group represent an important influence on each other’s learning (*ibid.*). A number of the findings from the present investigation connect strongly with these principles of constructivism: 1) learners devised active tactics and strategies to help them learn, 2) learners had their own internal understanding of concepts which often differed from that of their colleagues, 3) learners based their present learning on their prior experiences (e.g. Alison and her inhibitions about sight reading), and 4) learners helped and supported each other in the learning process.

Taken together, the above views suggest that there is a need to refine the traditional model of transmission, as applied to situations of teaching and learning in music, with a more complex model which takes into account what we now know in a detailed sense about learning. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that developing such a model should take the constructivist viewpoint into account.

### *Practice*

A number of important implications for refining our understanding of the concept of practice also arise from this work. In Chapter Two attention was drawn to the fact that practice had not previously been a major locus of ethnomusicological study. One possible reason for this neglect may relate to the dominance of the concept of transmission, with its emphasis upon the teacher as the primary influence on the learning process, rather than anything that the learner does. Another may relate to the general tendency of ethnomusicologists to search for and to focus on the exemplary performance or “finished product” of a performer or group of performers. Yet, the present field study has shown that practice was viewed by the practitioners as a particularly crucial activity that led to gaining competence on the fiddle. This finding implies that ethnomusicologists could gain further significant insights into understanding how the playing of musical instruments is developed by more systematic investigation of the role of practice. Some of the questions that ethnomusicologists need to address include the following. To what extent does the content of practice vary from culture to culture? What kind of function or functions does practice serve for individuals learning various musical genres? Are there cross-cultural variations in the importance that particular musical societies attach to practice? Notwithstanding the limitations of retrospective enquiry, what role did practice play historically in the context of traditional music learning?

Further, although as researchers we may have preconceived assumptions about the meaning of practice or may adopt operational definitions of it for specific enquiries, as here, it is also important to take into account the views of those who are the focus of investigation. Indeed, we need to find out what the *concept* of practice actually means to those we investigate. This standpoint is consolidated by the “event perspective” (Stone, 1982), which centres on inquiring into events that possess conceptual validity from the perspective of one’s informants. The present study tried to do this by asking students what they considered to be practice (i.e. finding out about “emic”, or “insider” descriptions of practice (Nettl, 1983). This produced some disparate opinions. For some, it included the playing they did in the fiddle classes and in pub sessions, as well as the solitary playing they did on the fiddle at home. This finding also highlights the fact that the boundaries of practice may be both culture-specific and context-sensitive.

In Chapter Five, a simple table was presented which showed the pattern that home practice generally followed for the six adult learners in this study. The chart demonstrated that practice sessions for most appeared to be conducted in stages. Stage one, as we have seen, was a preparatory phase in which learners familiarised themselves with the instrument, and stage two normally consisted of warm-up in which familiar tunes were often played. More generally, it would be useful to know if the performance of these phases is characteristic of all those learning a musical instrument or if this is a trait perhaps only of those who are at the beginning of developing their competency. If these stages are performed, we need to know what they consist of and how they are undertaken. In the case of stage two, for instance, it would be interesting to know more widely if, in the context of traditional music learning, the warm-up is performed by ear and consists of familiar tunes. Similarly,

it would be useful to know more about the variety of purposes that warm-ups may serve (e.g. as a psychological and physiological preparation to the practice session).

In the third stage of the practice session, learners generally attempted to learn the most recent material that they had been taught in the fiddle class and, as a revision exercise, some returned to tunes that they had previously been taught but were not very familiar with. As we have already seen, there were considerable variations in how students approached this stage. It would be interesting to know whether or not other learners incorporate what might be viewed as a third stage in their practice sessions. Further, in the case of traditional music learning, it would be helpful to know what kind of activities learners undertake during this stage and to what extent oral and written sources may be combined.

The fourth stage represented the period when learners commonly returned to familiar tunes in the process of learning a new piece. Such familiar tunes were given titles such as “happier tunes” or “old favourites”, and playing them appeared to help increase learners’ confidence. Again, it would be interesting to know how common it is for others learning a musical instrument to employ such procedures in their practice. Likewise, we need to know more about the possible strategies that individuals may use to help them learn tunes (exemplified by the lists that Roy and Jim G. used in this investigation), as well as how common it is for learners to construct their own notation systems.

In addition to what appeared to be the existence of stages in the practice sessions, this study found that practice had varying functions at different times for the learners. Practice helped to maintain a level of ability, to improve playing skills, and it also had a social purpose. It would be profitable to know what the function of practice is

for learners of other instruments, as well as whether it varies according to a learner's needs at different stages of the learning process.

This simple chart of home practice that was developed in the context of this investigation, then, may have wider implications as a model of practice activities. Further work on practice is required in various contexts in order to assess to what extent other learners exhibit similar features or different ones to those encountered in this study.

Methodological implications also arise from this work concerning the study of practice. This investigation focused on practice in an "in situ" setting -- that of the learners' homes -- and contrasts with a number of other studies of practice (e.g. Gruson 1988) which have been conducted in environments in which individuals do not normally practice. If reliable data is to be obtained, however, it seems important to try to observe individuals' behaviours and activities in as natural a state as possible. For instance, it is likely that the finding from the present investigation that practical problems (e.g. work and family) sometimes limited the length of practice sessions or even prevented learners from practising the fiddle, would not have been obtained from a study conducted in a laboratory. Further, it is probable that being investigated in such a context would have made learners feel less at ease. These points underline the fact that practice is a context-sensitive activity -- that is, the reliability of data obtained on practice will be dependent on the actual context in which it is obtained.

The two methods of data collection devised by the present researcher in order to obtain detailed information on practice, namely the tape diary and the written diary, also have ramifications for future work. Comments participants made about these

showed that they found the tape diary relatively easy to use as 1) the equipment was technically familiar and 2) it allowed them to give an immediate reflection on the learning experience. By contrast, the written diary, almost without exception, was perceived to be more difficult to maintain. One reason for this appeared to be that it was easier for learners to verbalise their experiences orally and spontaneously rather than to produce them later, in a reflective written form. These findings suggest that other researchers investigating music learning may find an approach where students record themselves on cassette tape useful.

Another aspect of the methodology of this study which proved successful was that the researcher knew the students in advance of conducting the core investigation. Learners mentioned, for instance, that because they knew the researcher personally, it made them feel more at ease with making comments in the tape diary. This finding emphasises the point that the technique of participant observation, used in the pilot investigation, can be a particularly useful tool for enabling a relationship of trust to be built up between researcher and informant.

#### *Further research in ethnomusicology*

For a long time now there has been the potential to reassess the question of teaching and learning in ethnomusicology. As a result of the research that has been undertaken on cognition especially, some of it by ethnomusicologists who have looked at musical experiences in various cultural contexts, we have refined our conceptual thinking by focusing on the mental activities involved in musical information processing. We now recognise that musical systems are in some ways like language, especially in light of the fact that language and music are the two principal ways by which humans pattern sound for social communication (Feld, 1974:198). One rather unexplored avenue, however, is the investigation of how the



acquisition of concepts and principles actually takes place. Although there has recently been a shift in focus from product to process in the study of learning, it is still with a view to understanding how a musical system operates, rather than how its operational principles and components are acquired by learners in a developmental context.

Indeed, whilst our conceptual thinking has advanced, ethnomusicologists still tend to focus on performers and performance events, rather than looking at how performers learn their skills. This can also be expressed by saying that research has focused on synchronic rather than diachronic perspectives: there have been few cognitive approaches to music which have considered how categories are acquired, or have changed over time.

The present investigation has shown that the commonly understood transmission model needs to be revised and refined if it is to continue to serve as a helpful concept to shape enquiries in teaching and learning contexts. Indeed, this researcher believes that the transmission metaphor is seriously limited in its utility in terms of capturing what happens in the specific sense of a teaching and learning context. It is a misleading term which implies that learning is undertaken by a transfer of information from teacher to student. This study has demonstrated, however, that learning is complex and does not occur in this way.

As well as relying less on the transmission model in shaping understanding of the specific teacher and pupil interaction, ethnomusicologists may perhaps, further enhance their insights by drawing more openly on ideas and research traditions from other disciplines which have learning as their focus. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the adoption of views and theories from other fields as a route to

expanding existing knowledge is not a new idea. Indeed, Nettl (1992b:181-2) notes that one characteristic of ethnomusicology is that it draws material from other areas, particularly from the disciplines of musicology, anthropology, and folklore. The results of the present study suggest that ethnomusicologists might readily draw ideas from modern adult learning. Concepts found in modern adult learning theory pertaining to the learner and the teacher (e.g. the teacher as facilitator, the notion of the learner as self-directed, and the principles of constructivism) offer ethnomusicologists a set of potentially rich and rewarding perspectives for thinking about the subject of teaching and learning, especially where adult students are concerned.

At the same time, however, it is necessary to remain aware that these concepts need to be deployed with due care. For one thing, some of these approaches are normally applied specifically to adult learning and thus may not be appropriate for the study of child learning. In addition, they are also derived from the experience of formal educational systems commonly found in the West, and thus may not be so appropriate when applied to non-western and traditional cultures.

As well as the need to supplement the transmission idea with more refined and sensitive approaches, detailed research needs to be undertaken on the process of learning in different contexts and cultures. In line with this, more research is needed on the practice people do. We need to examine what individuals consider to be practice, as well as how, what and why they practice. Ethnomusicologists have a particularly valuable role to play in this field of study in terms of being able to encourage cross-cultural studies for comparative purposes.

## **Adult music education**

In Chapter Two it was noted that the topic of adult music learning has not only been under-researched, but has also been neglected in terms of the themes of resource development and teaching practice. Both the paucity of recent research devoted to these areas and the findings of the present study suggest that approaches to teaching music to adults may not be rooted in any deep understanding about how adults actually engage in the task of learning. Consequently, the standard of how adults are being taught may in reality be of questionable effectiveness. This section draws from the findings of the present field study as well as from existing research in order to consider how existing teaching practices might be improved.

One theme which is apparent in much of the literature on the tuition of adults is the need to base teaching on the learners' needs. Bowles observes:

Specialists in adult education emphasize that both learners and educators should contribute to program content decisions, that input of the clientele should be maximized, and that needs assessment is an essential step in planning successful courses. (1991:192)

This point about the requirement for "needs assessment" is an important one. Indeed, in the context of the Edinburgh study, the failure of some of the teachers to take into account the fact that learners could not cope with four or five new tunes being introduced per week and being taught by ear, illustrates the fact that a proper "needs assessment" of the learners had not taken place. Extrapolating from this finding, then, there appears to be a need for the teacher to elicit feedback from students on a regular basis on, for instance, the teaching strategies that are being used in class and their effectiveness, as well as on what is actually being taught in lessons.

The fact that learners in this study had different and personally preferred learning styles (e.g. learning by ear or by using written music; see Chapter Five) also has

important ramifications for good teaching practice. As Beatty, Benefield and Linhart (1991:173) point out: "Adult educators need to become increasingly sensitive to the different learning styles adults bring with them into the learning experience." Indeed, the existence of different learning styles in a group situation is something that any teacher of adults may encounter. In the case of traditional music tuition, it could be very helpful for the teacher to find out what learners joining their class for the first time bring to the learning situation, including whether or not they can already read music, if they already are used to playing by ear, what kind of previous musical experiences they have had (e.g. if they can already play another musical instrument) as well as what they expect from the classes. Finding out such information is most important in light of the fact that teaching effectiveness is enhanced if it builds on what learners already know (Sloboda, 1987:30 ). Such background information could be easily obtained by asking participants to fill in a simple questionnaire at the commencement of the course. Moreover, this points to the need for clear prospective information to be given by agencies offering tuition about the ethos of the course and how teaching and learning will be undertaken, encouraged and resourced, as much as what the teaching is about (i.e. repertoire).

Olseng and Burley highlight another relevant point concerning the tuition of music to adults:

The music educator cannot teach adults in the same manner as children, with merely some minor adjustments. There are distinctive differences between adults and children in the way they perceive, think, feel, remember, move and are motivated. Adults, therefore, demand different teaching materials, methods and goals, and they demand a different kind of teacher role. (1987:29)

Teachers of adults may face a range of challenges, then, when teaching adults, especially if they are more accustomed to teaching children. The point that a different kind of teacher role is needed where adult learners are concerned is also a

significant one. Cropley (1977:132), for instance, suggests that teachers of adults might act as co-learners. In this context, they could perhaps adopt the role of a model of lifelong learning for students and be prepared to continually adapt and adjust. This role of the teacher as a co-learner emphasises the need for the teacher to be aware of some of the practical issues that adult learners may face (e.g. lack of time to devote to learning as a result of other commitments) and to offer support and encouragement accordingly.

The fact that the learners in the Edinburgh study lacked confidence and went through phases where they doubted their own abilities also points up the need for the teacher to be especially sensitive to their support role. These participants, as we have seen, tended to analyse and reflect on their own performances as learners and felt less than positive about their playing when they felt that they had not made much progress. The teacher, however, might be able to counteract these problems by offering greater encouragement to learners. Directing participants toward specific goals -- for instance, undertaking performances in public -- might also help to make learners feel more self-assured.

Lastly, Sloboda (1987:31) makes another point which applies to those responsible for educating adults. He notes: "High expectations are crucially important determiners of performance. . . . The more you expect of your students, the more they will achieve, the less you expect, the less they achieve." Previous research has also demonstrated that adults can learn music performance skills with a rate of progress that is comparable to children (Olseng and Burley, 1987:29). These discoveries, then, coupled with the results from the present investigation which showed that individuals were serious about improving their playing on the instrument, all point to the fact that it is important for teachers and similarly for organisations offering

traditional music tuition to expect a lot from their students. Correspondingly, they also need to ensure that the training they provide is intensive and rigorous as well as enjoyable.

The above discussion has demonstrated broadly that, in the tuition of music to adults, good teaching practice will be achieved partly by a systematised and organised approach on the part of the teacher. As well as an initial phase of needs assessment, there is also a need for tutors to continually monitor the effectiveness of their teaching. Such information might be obtained by asking learners to take part periodically in questionnaire surveys or occasionally by having a “brainstorming” session in class, where potential ideas on how classes might be improved are written up on a board or a flip chart, for instance.

Themes for further research on adult learning in the context of traditional music education appear at the end of the next section.

### **The tuition of traditional music**

In Chapter One it was noted that the formal tuition of traditional music in Scotland, especially in terms of classes catering for the fiddle, has recently burgeoned. A number of organisations and groups offer fiddle tuition on a regular basis, particularly in urban areas. Summer schools where the fiddle is taught are also widespread. A good deal of this varied tuition is aimed at the adult learner. Although these various classes may have been successful in attracting large numbers of students, however, little work has been undertaken to evaluate how successful they are in actually teaching traditional music. Moreover, because a number of these classes have arisen comparatively recently, it is conceivable that they may only represent the beginnings for this type of tuition that might be even more widely

available in the future. Indeed, this is a point which one individual concerned with the development of teaching practices has alluded to<sup>1</sup>. It may be timely, therefore, to consider the environments in which traditional music is taught and to evaluate existing teaching methods. Indeed, this is of relevance because, in years to come, groups who receive a level of public funding may find that they have to justify such finance to a greater extent than has been the case hitherto and demonstrate that they offer best value to their students as well as to those who fund them. Furthermore, information of this kind may be requested by funding bodies as part of their allocation procedures.

This section offers suggestions in particular about the fiddle teaching programme at the Adult Learning Project, Edinburgh. It explores whether aspects of the fiddle tuition could be improved and, if so, what might be done to make classes more effective. Although this discussion has local implications for those working within ALP, there may also be implications for teachers working in similar environments and for organisations operating comparable classes elsewhere. Indeed, this seems likely given that the researcher found similar patterns of teaching to that of ALP on visits she made to other groups<sup>2</sup>. The recommendations presented here may also have practical applications for the tuition of other instruments in traditional music classes (e.g. the tin whistle and the guitar) as well as for the tuition of other musical genres to adult learners in a group situation (e.g. jazz and popular music).

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<sup>1</sup> Stan Reeves, who runs tutor training courses at the Adult Learning Project, is actively trying to develop and refine teaching methods based largely on the ongoing experiences of the organisation (telephone conversation, 3 August 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Visits made by the researcher to the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop, a one day beginners' fiddle course held at the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Edinburgh and a workshop in Shetland fiddle playing held at the annual Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, for example, showed that a learning by ear approach was emphasised in each. A number of learners also recorded material from the lessons using portable cassette recorders and the majority of attendees were adults.



Moreover, a consideration of the implications arising from the Edinburgh field study is also important because of the emerging, contemporary emphasis upon lifelong learning. There is presently a growing interest in new and more efficient ways of teaching and learning, manifested partly through the growing use of computer technology in the learning environment and partly by the national commitment to expanding learning opportunities as widely as possible to all sections of society. Knowing more about how learners experience learning and their attitudes towards the tuition they receive will be helpful in shaping approaches to more effective ways of teaching and learning. Moreover, adapting teaching methods to the needs of learners is increasingly recognised as a principle of good practice in any particular setting given what we have recently come to know about the varied ways in which different individuals learn (see further, Nicol, 1997). It must be stressed, however, that the intent of this section is not to criticise the work undertaken by ALP or any other similar organisation. Rather, its purpose is to offer helpful and practical suggestions for teachers and class organisers based on the findings of the field study.

### *Learning in a group situation*

In Chapters Four and Five, it was noted that learning in a group situation was popular amongst the adult learners involved in the core investigation. The reasons for the popularity of learning in this environment included:

- it offered security to the learners
- it was seen as non-threatening (i.e. there was an avoidance of a one-to-one situation with a teacher)
- support was given to individuals by the other members in the class
- it helped to stimulate and motivate the learning process
- it was felt to be less expensive than learning in a one-to-one situation
- there was a social element attached to learning in the group

However, there were also problems associated with learning in this context. Less than satisfactory for certain learners, for example, was the fact that little assistance was available from the teacher to specific individuals due to the number of learners in the group. It was also difficult for learners to obtain individual feedback from the teacher on their progress. Rather the teacher's focus was on giving advice to the group as a whole and making general statements about how aspects of the group's playing might be improved. As a consequence, learners were obliged to monitor their own progress, and critique, appraise and evaluate their own attempts at learning. The need felt by several learners for greater individual attention highlights the general difficulties faced by any teacher in teaching adequately in a group situation. It also points up the need for the teacher to be alert to, and to address, the needs of individual members in the class where appropriate, and for flexible learning methods in the group situation. Limiting the number of individuals who can attend the group, perhaps to around ten, may be one way in which greater individual assistance might be attained. In practice however, this may be difficult to achieve due to the costs of running classes and the pressure on resources, for example, which act in favour of recruiting further members to a group.

Individual members might also be helped if the layout of the class were modified. During the core and pilot investigations, for example, learners sat behind tables and chairs and the teacher generally remained at the front of the class. For some, however, this format may have reminded them of a classroom situation at school with its implicit emphasis on teacher dependency, and consequently may have been off-putting. Indeed, Leigh (1991:53) observes that such settings can have this unwanted effect. Perhaps it might be better to have learners seated in alternative arrangements (e.g. in a circle) so that 1) each learner can receive equal attention from the teacher, and 2) learners are brought physically nearer to the tutor, enabling him or

her to observe and assist with any potential difficulties more readily. This ties in with the contention of Jaques (1991:140) that the physical arrangements of teaching rooms must be taken into consideration if the kind of educational and social relationships we desire are to be fostered.

Another way in which the needs of each learner could be catered for to a greater extent in the group situation is if part of the overall time in the class were allocated specifically to dealing with individuals' problems. It might be appropriate, for example, to set aside the last half-hour of the lesson for this purpose. Learners might also work in small groups during class, perhaps consisting of around three or four in number, and be encouraged to help each other. Further, these small groups might provide an appropriate unit for the teacher to address. Individual needs might also be more effectively addressed if the teacher were to invite direct questioning from each learner at all points in the lesson.

In addition, whereas performance was almost exclusively undertaken in the group format in the ALP fiddle classes, it might be helpful to encourage learners to play music on their own or in pairs occasionally during the lesson. Although this might prove somewhat daunting to learners who enjoy the security of the group, the teacher might be able to overcome any such apprehensions by creating a relaxed, informal learning environment in class. For instance, a "ceilidh" might be organised in class, hosted by the teacher, where students played tunes to one another.

Lastly, making resources related to fiddle learning available in class, such as tutor-books, teaching tapes and videos, text books and computer learning packages, which learners could work on by themselves at home, might also help to address individual needs more effectively. Indeed, visual resources in the form of still-life pictures or

video footage that demonstrate, for example, how experienced fiddlers hold the instrument and the bow, might prove particularly useful to students in terms of learning technique.

### *Content of classes*

The Edinburgh field study also demonstrated that most of the six learners aimed for *quality* in their fiddle playing, which was conceptualised variously as making a pleasing sound and playing with expression and feeling. Further, this was generally more important to participants than the number of tunes that they could play. The fact that quality was an end goal for most has implications for what is taught in the fiddle classes. Indeed, this finding contrasts with the general style of teaching at ALP where the emphasis is mainly on introducing and teaching new tunes rather than “perfecting” existing repertoire or addressing technical aspects of fiddle playing, such as how to hold the fiddle and bow.

There appear to be several ways in which the teacher could help individuals achieve greater “quality” in their playing, however. Firstly, there is a case for the teacher to limit the number of tunes taught in any particular lesson as well as over the duration of a term. Indeed, this point was felt particularly acutely by those participants who had difficulty in learning tunes by ear. Introducing two new tunes in a two-hour session (in addition to revising other repertoire) seemed to be a reasonable amount according to learners’ comments. Having said this, though, the number of new pieces taught in each lesson will be dependent on the level of difficulty of the tunes, the ability of the learners, and whether or not tunes are going to be learned by ear.

Secondly, there is a need for the teacher to revisit and revise “older tunes” in class with the aim of helping learners to refine material with which they are already

familiar. This was felt particularly keenly by Ken, as we have already seen, who maintained that he would prefer to be able to play a limited number of tunes well than pursue a greater number of tunes at a more basic level. Whilst repertoire was revised to some extent in the fiddle group that the students attended, this was normally done at the beginning of the lesson for the purpose of warming-up rather than for the purpose of explicitly refining material. Thus, it might be helpful if the teacher allocated several evenings per term, for example, specifically to refining particular tunes.

Thirdly, according to participants' comments, there is a need for the tutor to spend more time in class on teaching playing techniques. The fact that technique was not taught to any great extent, however, may relate to a conscious effort on the part of some of the tutors at ALP to re-create the ways in which traditional music was learned in the past. Accounts from unschooled players in Scotland who learned prior to around 1950 (see, for instance, Macdonald, 1976; and Cooke, 1986) show that it was common for bow hold and the way in which the instrument was held, for example, to be learned by imitating other players. Moreover, learners often simply adopted a playing position that felt comfortable to them by experimentation.

Nevertheless, the needs of the learners in this investigation point up the fact that more emphasis should be to be given to this area. One practical problem here, however, is that certain teachers, especially those who have learned to play the fiddle without any formal tuition, may not have a detailed knowledge of playing techniques. Thus, it might be useful if those organisations responsible for running classes were able to make training courses and course materials relating to this subject available to their tutors. The need for appropriate resources to assist both teachers and learners receives further consideration below.

### *Styles of playing*

In Chapter Four, the learners' perceptions of different playing styles were examined. One finding here was that, at that point in their learning, students were more preoccupied with gaining competence in their fiddle rather than playing in any particular style.

The fact that students did not view themselves as playing in any particular regional style has implications for the preservation of different styles of fiddle playing in Scotland. If certain styles are to be retained, it seems essential that fiddlers are taught these and, moreover, that the nuances of each are made explicit. In this context, it might be useful for the teacher to devise handouts relating to different playing styles. Listening to recordings in the fiddle class of fiddlers who play in different styles might also assist students.

According to the results of this investigation, it also seems important that information on styles of playing be introduced right from the start of the learners' attendance at classes. Otherwise, there may be a danger, as here, that students will envisage playing in a style as being something that is "difficult" and that only more competent players can achieve. The approach to teaching the fiddle in Shetland schools begun by Tom Anderson (Swing, 1991) might prove particularly useful as a model for other formal classes. Students are taught to play "Shetland style" from the very beginning and learn the lore and history surrounding particular tunes as well as the actual tunes themselves.

In addition, the preservation of regional fiddle styles will be partly dependent on a knowledge of styles by those who are actually teaching the instrument. Teachers, therefore, need to be able to play in a particular style as well as to have a knowledge

of the differences between various styles. Short training courses for tutors that focus on styles of playing might usefully be organised, where specialists are brought into organisations offering traditional music tuition, to give talks and demonstrations. Further education institutions might also have a role to play here in running courses for teachers or potential teachers. Moreover, support, too, is needed for the teacher in the classroom situation. Thus, it would be useful if a greater variety of audio and video material which focused on styles of playing were produced. Likewise, tune books and computer packages which relate to styles could also aid both the teacher and learners.

The issue of which regional style or styles might be taught in the group situation is also an interesting one. Should students learn to play in their teacher's style? Or should learners be given an introduction to various styles of playing and then be encouraged, later on, to select the one which appeals to them most? These questions are further complicated when learning takes place in an urban environment, as it is likely that learners will originate from different geographical areas of Scotland, as well as from outside Scotland, and may therefore have an affinity with different playing styles. As a result, teaching one style of playing in the group situation that will be appropriate to everyone in the class may be problematic. Nevertheless, if the system offering tuition were much more structured overall -- i.e., if there were a national system which oversaw the provision of traditional music education (this subject receives further attention below) -- individuals might have more choice. Indeed, students might even be able to choose to learn a style of playing much like they can choose to learn a certain language, for example, French or Italian, in an evening class setting. The ability of a group or organisation to offer classes on various playing styles, however, may be partly dependent on the level of external funding it receives as well as on the specialist knowledge of its tutors.



### *Teaching by ear*

Another important finding from this study was that certain of the learners in both the pilot and core investigations found it difficult to learn tunes by ear. Suggestions as to why students encountered problems in this context were documented in the last chapter. The fact that some of the group did have difficulty in learning in this way, however, has ramifications for teaching practice. Indeed, whilst the aim of teaching individuals to play the fiddle by ear may be a desirable orientation for organisations teaching traditional music, the results of this study suggest that, in reality, it may not be entirely practical to teach *adult* learners effectively in this way.

Moreover, it was not only those learners involved in the pilot and core phases who exhibited difficulties in this context. For example, one tutor at ALP mentioned to the researcher that some of the students in his class appeared to be having similar problems. Although he had tried to teach tunes by breaking them down into small chunks and then subsequently linking these together -- an approach emphasised in the literature on teaching by ear -- (Holmes, 1990), he noticed that some of the learners in his class “just could not play the tunes by ear”. As a result, he found that it was necessary to modify his teaching by offering sheet music to those who needed it. From his own experiences, this tutor concluded: “although everyone thinks learning by ear is a natural way of learning, . . . to some people it just doesn't come naturally”<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, although ALP as well as other similar organisations may be promoting a learning by ear approach because it resembles the “traditional” way in which the

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<sup>3</sup> The present researcher also found similar patterns in her own teaching. For example, when she announced to a beginner standard fiddle class at the Adult Learning Project that she was going to teach the group by ear, one class member quite bluntly said “I can't play by ear”. Moreover, two adult fiddle learners whom the researcher taught at her home both maintained that they were “unmusical” and, as a result, felt that they were unable to learn tunes by ear.

fiddle was learned -- a view held by the six learners in this investigation -- there are in fact several ways in which learning circumstances of the present day adult learner differs from that of the past. Further, it may be that, in some respects, these differences are unhelpful from the learners' point of view. For instance, the adult learners were generally given two or more new tunes to learn by ear in a two-hour session and had a week to practise those tunes before attending the next meeting of the class when two further new tunes would normally be introduced. Fiddlers who learned in traditional communities, however, would generally not have been under the same pressure to learn tunes within a regimented period of time. Moreover, because such fiddlers learnt predominantly as individuals, they would not have felt the obligation to keep up with their peers.

Another significant difference is that fiddlers in traditional communities would usually have begun learning as *children*. As a result, certain tunes might have become internalised in individuals' minds even before they began playing the instrument. Particular pieces might also have been reinforced as a result of the fact that the same tunes would commonly have been played on different instruments (e.g. mouth organ), or diddled. In addition, attending dances might also have helped individuals to learn tunes as, in such circumstances, they would be privy to repeated hearings of the same melodies.

Moreover, those learning to play the fiddle in such traditional communities would often have been learning in what, in musical terms, would have been a primarily aural society, where printed or published sources would seldom have been employed to learn tunes. As a result, individuals would have had little *choice* in how they learned repertoire. This contrasts with today's adult learners who have access to, and who can choose to learn from many sources.

Despite these differences, however, there are several ways in which patterns of teaching by ear might be enhanced in the context of the ALP group. First, the results of the previous chapter which showed that too many tunes taught in a session of the class were not helpful to learners suggests (as mentioned earlier) that there is a need for the teacher to limit the number of new tunes taught in a session if a teaching by ear approach is to be used.

Second, in order to allow for repeated hearing of tunes and to give individuals the opportunity to hear tunes before they arrive at the fiddle lesson, it could also be useful for the teacher to offer tape recordings of tunes to learners in advance of classes. This is already being done by some of the tutors at ALP. Deciding what should be taught in classes in advance of a particular term may not be straightforward, however. As one teacher at ALP to whom I spoke commented: “there is no explicit syllabus for each level . . . You end up teaching to the level of the average person in the class”. Broadly, his comments point up the fact that a certain amount of flexibility was generally demanded of the tutors. Given this, organising a syllabus in advance of the start of term without knowing the level of ability of potential learners in the class may be problematic.

Third, singing through tunes in class might also assist students, as it is well-known that this activity can help to improve aural skills. In this context, the traditional practice of diddling in Scotland, which involves singing tunes to non-lexical vocables (Chambers, 1980) and is used mainly in the oral transmission of tunes rather than as a performance genre (Miller, 1988:61), might prove particularly helpful. Diddling generally does not involve written music and could be used by beginning fiddlers as a way of learning tunes before they actually commence playing the instrument.

Further, organisations offering tuition could supply recorded extracts of diddling to any of the tutors they employ who are less familiar with this genre<sup>4</sup>.

Fourth, from the teachers' point of view, there is also a need for a transparent methodology relating to teaching by ear to be articulated. Again, this was highlighted by one tutor to whom I spoke who felt that no explicit methodology or "theory" relating to teaching by ear had been made available to him. Thus, it could be expedient for organisations to offer guidance, perhaps in the form of books, videos and training courses to their tutors which relate to teaching by ear.

Whilst the above suggestions may help to improve the ways in which teaching by ear is undertaken, however, the findings from this investigation show that there is actually a very strong argument for teaching adult students using a *combination* of both aural and written sources. In particular, the differing learning styles that were prevalent amongst class members point up the fact that teaching students in one way alone may not be helpful. Accordingly, tutors may find that the most satisfactory ways of addressing the needs of *all* the members in the group is to teach tunes by ear but also to distribute the written music to students who wish it.

Two potential problems arise with the approach of teaching students using a combination of both sources, however, which are worth mentioning here. One is that tutors themselves may not read music all that fluently and as a consequence may not wish to teach using written music. Another is that not all tunes are to be found in published collections, especially if they have been recently composed. If teachers cannot transcribe music themselves they will almost certainly have difficulty in giving sheet music to students. Further publications of fiddle tunes, therefore, will

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of diddling may be found on the cassette which accompanies the text by Miller (1988), for instance, which is designed for use by teachers.

act as a useful resource for teachers. It might also be helpful to create a database or a library of such information. Moreover, if this were nationally based, it could be accessed by tutors working throughout Scotland and Great Britain as well as overseas.

### *Infrastructure and resources*

An appropriate infrastructure is also needed to support both teachers and learners. This chapter has already highlighted the need for the development of resources related to fiddle learning such as videos, tune books, and cassette tapes. In addition, the core investigation has demonstrated that tape recorders played a very useful role in the learning process. At present, however, learners who bring tape recorders to class are expected to supply their own machines and tapes. It may be that the infrastructure to support classes might include tape recorders and tapes which could be borrowed or hired from the organisation responsible for the teaching for those unable to provide their own. Such a development might be particularly useful to those of limited means.

Another aspect of the question of infrastructure is that very few explicit guidelines currently exist on the teaching of traditional music which can be accessed by agencies or teachers. Thus, there appears to be a need for resources that explain 1) how the teaching of traditional music might be undertaken, 2) how it might be resourced, and 3) how both adult and child learners might be tutored most effectively. Hence, a manual covering these themes would be useful. Similarly, tutors of traditional music might also be assisted by attending courses that focus on the techniques of teaching. Although this is already happening to some extent within ALP, for example, which runs residential courses for its tutors on this subject at regular intervals, it would be useful if training for tutors were available more widely

at various centres. Furthermore, it might also be helpful if such courses led to formal qualifications<sup>5</sup> which were in turn recognised by employers and relevant funding agencies.

It is also the case that whilst there are a large number of groups and organisations which teach traditional music in Scotland to both adults and children, at present the majority of these appear to work in isolation from one another. Greater co-ordination between them, however, would enable resources, experiences and expertise to be shared<sup>6</sup>. Further, as the current level of provision in traditional music education varies according to geographical area<sup>7</sup>, an overall strategy is also needed to ensure that traditional music tuition is available throughout Scotland. Whereas, presently, individuals and groups are running courses and, in some instances, are applying to bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council or their local authority for funding, more needs to be done systematically and on a wider scale. Indeed, it is my perception that, ideally, a national organisation should take on the responsibility for overseeing the provision of traditional music tuition in Scotland. It might be useful for such an organisation to follow, in part, the model set up by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (The Association of Irish Musicians) which provides many classes in its branches throughout Ireland and abroad, and at other venues such as at its annual summer schools (Irish Traditional Music Archive Leaflet, 1989).

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<sup>5</sup> One recent development in this area is the BA course in Scottish Music at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, which began in 1996, and leads to a degree in traditional music.

<sup>6</sup> This is already happening to some extent, however, as a group called SCAT (Scottish Culture and Traditions) was formed in Aberdeen in April 1997 based on the model of ALP in Edinburgh. Further, the Aviemore Learning Project has also been drawing on the music teaching methods used at ALP (phone conversation with Stan Reeves, 3 August 1998).

<sup>7</sup> For example, whereas fiddle tuition for adults is available on a regular basis in cities such as Glasgow (e.g. Glasgow Fiddle Workshop) and Edinburgh (e.g. ALP), in other regions, such as Morayshire, tuition for adults is available on a much more limited basis. Indeed, in the latter area, "taster" sessions have been run for individuals, reflecting the fact that there is limited provision in fiddle tuition (interview with Dave Francis, 17/2/98).

However, these various developments will only be achieved if the requisite funding is made available. The problem of how to finance such activity for the adult learner is not unique to the Scots fiddle tradition; it has also been a recurrent theme in discussions relating to lifelong learning (Cropley, 1977).

In a similar vein, the lack of fiddle tuition in schools also needs to be addressed. Chapter One noted that the availability of this varies from school to school and region to region. Nonetheless, if youngsters are to be given an equal opportunity to learn the fiddle, it is surely important that tuition is available throughout Scotland. In order for this to occur, however, local authority education departments across Scotland may need to examine their existing policies. Moreover, if tuition is to go ahead on a large scale, there will also be a need to ensure that instrumental teachers are trained appropriately. This might be accomplished by conducting in-service courses for existing members of staff. Similarly, music courses at degree and postgraduate levels which cater for string instructors might include a component on the teaching techniques of Scots fiddle playing.

*Implications for the formal tuition of traditional music: The Edinburgh example*

The previous section has considered how existing fiddle tuition in formal settings might be enhanced. It is also interesting, however, to look briefly at some of the implications that have arisen as a result of the formal tuition of traditional music within the context of the city of Edinburgh. Swing (1991), for example, has shown that the formal tuition of traditional music can have quite dramatic consequences. Indeed, she contends that the tuition of fiddle in schools in Shetland has led to a “crisis of context”, because fiddlers there were trained to play for “listening” audiences rather than for dancing, yet there were only a limited number of venues in which to pursue the former within the Shetland Isles.



Research undertaken by the present author suggests that the phenomenon of adult learning (on various instruments) in the city of Edinburgh was viewed in varying ways by musicians involved in the traditional music scene there. For instance, most of the musicians that the researcher spoke to praised the fact that adults were getting the chance to learn, and felt that the growing number of adult learners was encouraging for the promotion and perpetuation of traditional music as a whole. Others mentioned that the traditional music classes held at ALP provided a particularly valuable social function for attendees. The classes allowed individuals to meet others with similar interests as well as to interact with traditional musicians. Some, however, viewed the growing number of adult learners taking part in the traditional music scene in Edinburgh less than positively. Indeed, a traditional musician who taught adults in one organisation found the growing number of adult learners to be a worrying trend, especially in the light of the fact that some of them were now teaching traditional music themselves and playing for dances. He maintained that “there is only so much work to go around”, and felt that the “traditional music scene” would not be able to cope with these newcomers in terms of the additional competition for employment that they might potentially create.

There has also been a growth in the number of sessions as well as in the number of individuals taking part in these events in Edinburgh as a result of the work of ALP. The organisation, as was noted earlier, encourages its students to perform in sessions following their weekly lessons, and to play at sessions at every opportunity where possible. As a result of this policy, sessions where adult learners participate now take place on most nights of the week, centred around various bars, pubs and hotels in Edinburgh. This development appears to the researcher to be positive in that it promotes live traditional music and gives learners the chance to play music outside

the class context<sup>8</sup>. The majority of the musicians that I spoke to also agreed that it was encouraging. However, the increase in the number of adult learners participating in sessions was viewed less than positively by certain traditional musicians that this author met. Some felt that the quality of a good deal of the adults' playing was "not of a high standard" and, although recognising that the sessions were enjoyable for the learners themselves who played in them, felt that the music that these adults played was "not all that easy for an audience to listen to". One person I met was also particularly critical of the protocol of adult learners at sessions and said "I would be very wary of beginning a tune if I couldn't finish it". Another felt that a group of adult learners had the capacity to "take over" an existing session. One reason why these adult learners may have provoked such criticism from traditional musicians was that they tended to have a fairly limited repertoire, based largely round tunes they had learned in class. The opinions reported above, however, demonstrate that critics were failing to take into account the fact that these adults were *learners*.

*Further research: The teaching and learning of traditional music*

The above discussion suggests that there are a number of issues which are in need of further exploration in the field of traditional music education. Indeed, there is scope for a broad range of studies that dwell on the formal tuition of traditional music in Scotland, as this is currently an under-researched area. Overall, however, more attention needs to be given to those learning rather than those teaching. The teaching and learning of other instruments in addition to the fiddle also merits exploration, as do those classes that teach dance. An investigation of the formation of such classes and of the motivations, interests and backgrounds of individuals responsible for their instigation might also be a profitable research focus. The question of how such

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<sup>8</sup> One interesting development has been the instigation of what are advertised as "slow sessions", which are designed so that those learning have the opportunity to play tunes slowly instead of "up to speed" in a session. These have been run by the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop.

groups are funded and sponsored also deserves to be looked into. Lastly, an investigation of the adult learner's role in Strathspey and Reel Societies in Scotland would also be worthwhile in shedding light on the ways in which attendance at these groups may constitute a learning experience for participants.

In relation to the adult learners who attend evening classes, summer schools and workshops, further exploration is needed into issues such as the motivations participants have for attending classes. The interaction between the teacher and the learners in the class, the support that learners may give each other within the group, and the social learning that may take place in the class, might also be explored with profit. Further, a study of the impact of the formal tuition of traditional music in such group settings and its influence on the local traditional music scene could also be worthwhile.

As well as considering adult learning in such formal contexts, we need also to consider those organisations which cater largely for the tuition of traditional music to children. We need to know more about the possible differences between adults and children who are learning to play musical instruments in terms of their expectations and practical requirements. An exploration of the fiddle tuition taking place in schools throughout Scotland and in the after-school groups in which children can learn traditional music, could also constitute a valuable study. The role of organisations which cater especially for the tuition of traditional music to children might also be surveyed.

Further research is needed, too, into the role that technology plays in traditional music learning. More work needs to be done particularly on how the tape recorder is used by individuals, as well as on the possible changes that students may effect in their use of technology over time. Particularly, it would be interesting to look at how

a group of adults commencing the fiddle use technology and to compare this with the role that technology plays for more competent players.

The use of a computer by one learner in this study was another instance of the use of technology as an aid to learning. One wonders a) how typical this is of adult fiddle learners? and b) to what extent and in what ways children growing up in the computer-literate society of today will make use of such technology? In future years it may well be that computers will become more heavily employed to aid learning on musical instruments, especially with the likely increase in the provision of computer packages which encourage self-learning.

Research is also needed to ascertain to what extent different systems of notation may be used as learning and teaching devices in traditional music, as well as what kinds of notational systems are used. In addition, enquiries are also needed to understand how common it is for adults to make up their own adaptations to the conventional system of notation and of the extent to which children are likely to do so. The possible interchange between oral and written sources in the learning process is another interesting topic which could profitably be explored.

### **Summary of Chapter Six**

This chapter has considered a number of key implications which have arisen from this study. It was argued, firstly, that the transmission concept needs to be substantially revised if it is to continue to be used as a frame to help us understand learning in the context of the teacher-pupil situation. Moreover, it was contended that researchers working within the field of ethnomusicology could helpfully seek to expand our knowledge about practice. In particular, we need to seek to understand in

much greater depth what practice is considered to be, what it consists of, and what its importance is to those who are learning.

Specific recommendations relating to the tuition of adult learners, especially in a group situation, have also been postulated in this chapter. These included that the teacher should: 1) be aware of the possible variations in learning styles in the group situation, 2) conduct a proper needs assessment of class members in order to maximise the assistance that can be given to each, and 3) have high expectations of their students.

Lastly, issues relating to the enhancement of traditional music tuition in a group learning setting were discussed. It was suggested that, in the context of the Edinburgh group, for example: 1) there is a need for the teacher to try to give greater individual attention to each member of the class; 2) there is a need for the teacher and organisation to critically reconsider what is taught in classes and how teaching is undertaken (e.g. more emphasis on technique and styles of playing may be desirable); and 3) there is a need for a more appropriate infrastructure to support both teachers and learners. Practical suggestions were made as to how each of these might be achieved. Another significant theme in this chapter was that, according to the fieldwork data obtained in this investigation, teaching tunes *exclusively* by ear to adult learners may not be wholly successful. This seems especially important given that, up to now, it generally appears to have been assumed by most groups teaching traditional music that the teaching by ear approach is, by and large, helpful to students.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined how adults learn to play Scots fiddle. Using a sample of six adult learners and focusing principally on the practice activities they undertook in their homes it endeavoured to find out more about the process of learning for each of them. The main questions that this study addressed were: how did these adults go about learning to play the fiddle? what kind of methods did they use to help them learn tunes in the Scots fiddle tradition? and what was the experience of learning the instrument like for each individual? The investigation found that their approaches to learning the fiddle showed significant differences, especially in the ways in which they preferred to learn tunes. Some learned tunes by ear, others used written music, and some used a combination of the two. The ways and the extent to which they used technology to help them learn also varied in important ways. Whereas certain learners did not always refer to the tape recording they had made in the fiddle class at home, others made extensive use of it, and in some cases used it as a means of repeating the whole lesson again. Further, whereas some listened to the tape simply to remind them of the notes and rhythm of a particular tune, others listened for more detailed information such as phrasing of the piece and the teacher's style of playing.

Learning the fiddle at home was also, for most, a highly structured activity which followed a well-defined routine. In addition, participants often employed complex and highly individual strategies to help them learn, such as constructing lists of the tunes that they could and could not play by ear and, in the case of one learner, making written transcriptions of fiddle tunes from listening to recordings. The ways in which most tended to combine both aural and visual sources to help them learn tunes also highlighted this complexity.

These principal findings have implications for several theoretical concepts in ethnomusicology. In particular, the concept of transmission, which implies at a fundamental level that musical information can be “passed on” from teacher to student, did not provide a relevant framework of understanding for the learning activity that the researcher observed during her role as a participant observer in the adult fiddle class, or for understanding the data that were subsequently obtained in the core investigation. According to the results of this study, information is not readily conveyed from one person to another as this concept implies. Further, such a view does not genuinely reflect the individualistic and widely varying nature of the particular ways in which learning takes place. As a result, this study represents one of the first ethnomusicological works to seriously challenge the concept of transmission as it is often thought to apply in a teaching and learning context. Such a challenge is based on solid ground: although the transmission idea has been a central one in numerous enquiries, it has seldom been tested to see how it actually operates in a practical sense in a teaching and learning environment.

Implications also arise for understanding better the nature of “practice” as it applies to adults learning the fiddle. This study found that what each of these learners chose to include in their conceptions of practice varied considerably. Some viewed practice as the playing they did at home, some viewed it as the playing they did in pub sessions and in the fiddle class, and some viewed it as a combination of the three. In itself, this is a significant finding as in many studies of practice the meaning of the activity is often taken for granted and has been rarely clearly defined.

In the case of the present study, the variability in what learners meant by the term necessitated the restriction to a focus on home practice, an activity which participants commonly agreed was the most important facet of practice. This approach revealed a



richness of process and organisation. Whilst the details of practice varied from individual to individual, practice sessions for most of the learners took place in stages, including a preliminary stage where they familiarised themselves with the instrument, a warm-up stage where familiar tunes were played, and a third stage where new material was learned and older tunes were revised. The fact that favourite tunes were often played in the process of learning a new tune, usually to help to restore learners' confidence, represented another stage. Indeed, much of the behaviour that learners exhibited in their practice sessions appeared to be undertaken in order to give them greater confidence and security.

Several methodological aspects of this investigation also deserve mention. Firstly, this study adopted an approach whereby learning was examined in various contexts in which it actually took place. This approach, which was in line with research practices in ethnomusicology, was particularly fruitful in terms of gaining an insight into what the experience of learning was like for each learner. For example, it showed that learners often faced difficulties in the learning process, that the process of learning included a strong emotional dimension, and that in this respect learners supported one another in a number of ways. Participants also indicated that the methods of data collection used here did not interfere much with their normal practice behaviour. It is possible however, that had this study been conducted in a laboratory where individuals were observed in isolation from one another, some of this significant data would not have been obtained. Further, it is likely that learners would have felt less comfortable in such a situation with being observed. The present researcher, then, concurs with the standpoint of Cole (1996) who, working in the field of psychology, notes that, in order to obtain authentic data, scholars need to examine human activity entrenched in its social and cultural context. Moreover, one way of assessing the reliability of data obtained from an investigation may be, where

possible, to obtain feedback from one's informants concerning their participation in the study, as here.

Secondly, this study employed an interdisciplinary approach using ideas and methods from both ethnomusicology and modern adult learning theory. The fact that it dealt with adult learners, of course, meant that it was appropriate to draw ideas from both these fields. However, it is also significant that perspectives from the field of adult learning informed this researcher's critique of the notion of transmission, and that methodologies widely used in that and other disciplines were adapted and employed in this study, e.g. the tape diary and written diary. This study provides, then, an illustration for other researchers of how ideas and approaches from two distinct disciplines may be helpfully combined.

Another significant aspect of the methodology was that procedures for the core stage were adapted in response to data obtained from the field investigation. This reflexive approach allowed the researcher to remain sensitive to the study findings as they emerged, enabling critical reflections on the established concept of transmission, for instance, to inform a shift in the focus of the study as it unfolded. In retrospect, this was viewed as a particularly valuable methodological strategy. Employing such an approach is also relevant more widely within the context of ethnomusicology.

Bohlman writes:

Canonic reflexivity -- challenging a canon while being challenged by it -- has been a distinctive trait of ethnomusicology's development since the 1950s and is coeval with the modern coming-of-age of the field. The full articulation of this reflexivity began with the decision to break with other fields in the early 1950s and to chart an independent disciplinary course. (1992:118)

However, whilst ethnomusicology may historically have taken "an independent disciplinary course", as Bohlman notes above, largely for the sake of defining its own

identity, *that* canon is now itself being challenged, as ethnomusicological work has both had an influence on other disciplines and continued to draw on other schools of thought. Indeed, the present research study demonstrates the argument that coalitions between ethnomusicology and other disciplines can do much to enhance understanding of canonical concepts within the field of ethnomusicology. For instance, this investigation found that one of the main problems with the concept of transmission is that it has been used in ethnomusicology in a general way to denote both the transference of an established repertoire as distinct from the processes of learning and acquisition, yet both of these senses inform one another. By drawing on views from learning theory which shift the usual emphasis in ethnomusicology on the former onto the other sense of the term of learning and acquisition, however, the established concept of transmission has been refined. In doing so, the views from two disciplines have been synthesised.

Several primary lines of future inquiry stem from this investigation. Chiefly, there is a need for other researchers in ethnomusicology to take on board the problems inherent in the concept of transmission and to view it much more critically as a framing device for undertaking research. Consistent with this we need to develop more satisfactory models of how learning occurs in reality. In order to do so, we will need to investigate: 1) the process of learning as it actually occurs in a wide variety of settings and musical traditions; 2) the learning that is undertaken by both child and adult learners (where appropriate) in each context; and 3) the learning and development activities of individuals who range in ability from that of beginning student to proficient musician. It may well be that the principles which underlie the concept of constructivism can be helpfully taken into account in such enquiries. Moreover, additional work needs to be undertaken in order to further refine our understanding about disciplinary concepts such as practice.

Research along the above lines will undoubtedly serve to both broaden and deepen our understanding of how musical traditions are learned in differing contexts. However, it is also important that findings from such enquiries are used in pragmatic ways. Hitherto, it has quite often been the case that research on learning has not been applied productively in educational settings. This situation is unsatisfactory, especially in light of the fact that good teaching ought to be based on the needs of those learning. As a consequence, not only is there a need for greater research on the theme of learning, there is also a need to use the results of this research creatively and imaginatively in order to devise ways in which musical traditions may be learned more effectively.

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## Appendix 1

### Examples of groups which offer fiddle tuition to adults<sup>1</sup>

Organisation	Location	Description of class	Level (e.g. beginner, intermediate, advanced)
<b>Adult Learning Project</b>	Edinburgh	Weekly group fiddle lessons.	All levels
<b>Balnain House</b>	Inverness	Frequent one day fiddle workshops and weekly classes in fiddle and playing by ear.	Beginners
<b>Celtic Connections Festival</b>	Glasgow	Group learning workshops as part of festival.	Various levels
<b>Glasgow Fiddle Workshop</b>	Glasgow	Weekly group fiddle lessons.	All levels
<b>The Lemon Tree</b>	Aberdeen	"Rootin About Weekend": Irish fiddle workshops.	All levels
<b>Scots Fiddle School</b> (University of St. Andrews)	St. Andrews	Residential fiddle course for children and adults. Individual and group lessons.	All levels (minimum of Associated Board Grade 3 recommended)
<b>University of Edinburgh</b> (Centre for Continuing Education)	Edinburgh	Saturday school, one day course.	Beginners
<b>University of Stirling</b>	Stirling	Scots fiddle summer school, one week duration.	All levels except complete beginners
<b>Sabhal Mor Ostaig</b>	Isle of Skye	Five day summer courses.	Intermediate and advanced levels

<sup>1</sup>Information for this chart has been taken from publicity leaflets/newsletters produced by each organisation during the 1995/96 period. It should be noted that some of these organisations also offer tuition to children, and that the tuition offered by each varies from year to year, especially as groups expand. For instance, in September 1998, the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop offered five levels of tuition as well as individual lessons and a children's class.

Adult Learning Project Enrolment Form (1996/97 session)

Enrolment Form

Please ✓ the box for each class you wish to attend

**Accordion**

Absolute Beginners

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Improving Beginners

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Button Box

**Dance**

Beginner's Celtic Dance

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Celtic Dancers' Workshop

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Ab Beg Step Dance

Thurs

☐ £15 ☐ £5

Beg Step Dance

Thurs

☐ £15 ☐ £5

Irish Step Dance

Thurs

☐ £15 ☐ £5

Adv Step Dance

Thurs

☐ £15 ☐ £5

Step Dance Swapshop

Sat

☐

**Fiddle**

Absolute Beginners

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Absolute Beginners

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Improving Beginners

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Improving Beginners

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Intermediate

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Intermediate

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Advanced Intermediate

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Guitar**

Guitar Accompaniment

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Mixed Instrument Classes**

Beginning to Play Together

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Intermediate Mixed

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Mixed Workshop

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Tim's Workshop

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Women's Workshop

Sat

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Mixed Instrument Groups**

Monday Ensemble

Mon

☐ FREE

West Edinburgh Folk Group

Thurs

☐ £10 ☐ £5

**Pipes**

Chanter

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Playing for Dancing**

Beginning to Play for Dancing

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Playing for Dancing

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Song**

Women and Folksong

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Song Workshop

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Whistle**

Absolute Beginners

Thurs

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Intermediate

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Whistle Session Tunes

Wed

☐ £32 ☐ £12

Workshop

Mon

☐ £32 ☐ £12

**Children's**

Bairns' Bash

Mon

☐ Free

Bairns' Bash

Thurs

☐ Free

Enrolment Form

Please fill in ALL sections of the Enrolment Form. Some details are confidential (status age etc) and will only be used as statistics eg for grant applications.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

DAYTIME

EVENING

STATUS

Waged

Under 18

Student

AGE

Under 25

51-60

GENDER

Male

Female

for beginners' classes please give a brief description of your experience e.g. none or played at school 20 years ago.

for mixed instrument classes please tell us which instrument/s you play

I enclose a cheque for .....

made payable to

ALP Scots Music Group

Workshops

Please tick for an information leaflet

SEPT

OCT

NOV

DEC

FEB

MAR

Shetland Dance

Beginning to Read Music

ALP Study Break

Fiddle 96

Beginning to Read Music

Bodhran, The Back Line

Mixed Instrument

Edinburgh Folk Festival

Edinburgh's Youth Gathering

I would like details of

SMOG SUBSCRIBERS

96/97 Fees

Fees are payable at the start of term and cover 10 weeks of classes. Discounts are available when paying for more than one term and/or class.

ONE CLASS

one term

two terms

Waged

£32

£60

Concs

£12

£20

TWO CLASSES

one term

two terms

Waged

£60

£110

Concs

£20

£35

Please complete both sides of the form and return to

ALP Scots Music Group 184 Dalry Rd Edinburgh EH11 2EP

## Appendix 3

### Summary of the biographical details of the core investigation participants

Name	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Children	School Qualifications	Post-school Education and Achievements
Alison	42	Writer	Divorced	None	7 'O' Levels  5 Highers	1971-75 MA Psychology  2 years' postgraduate research in psychology
Roy	33	Accountant	Single	None	7 'O' Grades  4 Highers	1986-88 HNC Accounting  1988-94 Chartered Institute of Management Accountant Membership Exams
Andy	36	Maintenance Engineer	Single	None	5 'O' Grades	1976-1980 City and Guild, Mechanical Engineering
Jim G.	39	Computing Team Leader	Married	Two	7 Highers  2 CSYS	1974 -79 B.Sc. (hons.) Botany  1979-81 M.Sc. Crop Production
Jim M.	39	Community Psychiatric Nurse	Married	Three	4 'O' Grades  1 Higher	1974-77 Psychiatric nurse training  1978-79 General nurse training  1986 to present. Open University study
Ken	42	Veterinary Surgeon	Married	None	6 'O' Grades  5 Highers	1972-77 Bachelor Veterinary Medicine and Surgery

## Appendix 4 i.

### Copy of the Tape Diary Guidance Sheet

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#### GUIDANCE FOR TAPING YOUR PRACTICE SESSIONS (The Tape Diary)

Gaining detailed insight into how players learn their skills will be helped immensely by having a record of practice habits. The aim of the tape diary is to provide an aural account of how you go about your practice. For the purposes of this study, please record only your home practice sessions, not your playing in the fiddle classes or in pub sessions.

- Please **use the tape every time you practise** throughout the duration of the study. By practice, I mean every time you play your fiddle in your normal place of practice. For example, if you play along with a cassette tape or the radio at home, please record this also.
- Before you start your practice, please **record the date and time** of each session.
- Please **do not stop the tape** during your practice sessions.
- Please can you state on the tape whether you are **using written music or playing by ear** each time you begin in one mode or move from one to the other.
- You are also invited to **make comments** about your practice on the tape. In these comments it would be helpful if you could tell me 1) **what you are trying to accomplish**. For example, are you trying to play the music faster? Improve the tuning? Learn the tune without the music? Make a better sound? 2) Please can you also state if you are having any **problems**. For example, "I can't get the hang of this bit", "I seem to be having difficulties with this part", etc.
- It would also be helpful if you could **record your feelings** whilst practising. For example, are you enjoying playing a particular piece of music? Do you like the piece of music you are playing? How do you think it sounds?
- For the above two points you can make as many or as few comments as you wish. You might choose to do this during the practice session whilst you are practising, or you might wish to wait until the end of the practice session.
- Please **record anything you think may be relevant** to how you as an individual practise the instrument, rather than leave it out.
- Lastly, please **bring the tapes back to me each week**. This will help avoid the possible problem of tapes being misplaced or taped over again. It would be most unfortunate if what you had recorded was lost due to error.

## Appendix 4 ii.

### List of contents<sup>1</sup> of the accompanying compact disc<sup>2</sup>

#### Item 1 Andy

##### Example 1 *The Shetland Fiddlers' Society*

This example shows how Andy typically used the tape recording that he had made in the fiddle class in his home practice sessions. In this instance, he listened to the tune, “The Shetland Fiddlers’ Society”, on the tape and followed the teacher’s instructions about the piece. In doing so, he was essentially repeating the fiddle lesson at home. This example also demonstrates how Andy used the technique of repetition in order to help him learn a tune. (A transcription of the “Shetland Fiddler’s Society”, obtained from the ALP class, to which Ken had added his “numbers”, may be found in figure 5.4 in Chapter Five).

##### Example 2 *The Boys of Ballymot* (Irish Jig)

In this extract, Andy was playing by ear and was revising “The Boys of Ballymot”, a tune with which he was already familiar. He stated on the tape that he thought that he had played this tune quite a few times in sessions because he seemed to “pick it up very easily”. Again, one can hear Andy repeating the tune several times in order to improve it.

#### Item 2 Roy

##### Example 1 *Bennachie Sunrise* followed by *The Ale is Dear*

Here, Roy played two tunes by ear with which he was already familiar. This example demonstrates the extent to which Roy used ornamentation such as slides and grace notes in his fiddle playing.

##### Example 2 Various tunes

These tunes are taken from Roy’s first recorded practice session in which he was, in his own words, “a bit nervous” about making the recording. This example demonstrates the interchange between playing tunes by ear and playing them from the sheet music that was a typical feature of Roy’s practice sessions. It also illustrates how Roy tended not to spend much time on any particular tune in a single practice session and, as a consequence, usually played a considerable number of tunes each time he practised the fiddle at home.

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<sup>1</sup> Transcriptions of the majority of the tunes mentioned in this section may be found in Appendix 7.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, as a result of the fact that the recordings on the compact disc were in most cases originally made on low quality cassette recorders, the spoken portions of some of the tracks are slightly indistinct. Although these portions have been enhanced using technological means where possible, the brief written text presented with each example is offered as an additional guide to listeners.

### Item 3 Jim G.

#### Example 1 *Ashokan Farewell* and *Aros Park*

In this particular practice session on a tuesday night following the fiddle class on monday, Jim explained that he was in a bit of a dilemma as a result of not receiving sheet music from either of the two teachers that had taught the group at the previous two fiddle classes. In addition, he had forgotten to take his tape recorder to the ALP class, and hence had no record of the tunes that had been most recently introduced. Instead of learning these new tunes, he stated that what he hoped to do was to practise some of the tunes that he knew already but wanted to learn by ear.

Jim played “Ashokan Farewell” and “Aros Park”, a march, as a warm-up to this practice session. Interestingly, he said about the latter: “I always play this from the music even though I think I probably know most of it”. Using the written music appeared to help Jim feel more secure as well as more confident.

### Item 4 Jim M.

#### Example 1 *Da Slockit Light*

#### Example 2 *Morrison's Jig*

Jim practised two tunes with which he was already familiar by ear in each of these examples. He repeated each tune several times.

#### Example 3 *Kenny Gillies of Portnalong*

Jim said that he was “trying to remember that [the tune] from the music, but I’m not reading the music . . .” This extract shows how using written music could assist him in retrieving a tune from his memory.

### Item 5 Alison

#### Example 1 *The Longhope Lifeboat Disaster*

This is an extract from Alison’s first recorded practice session in which she decided to try and learn a tune called the “Longhope Lifeboat Disaster” which she had heard played on an album. Interestingly, this tune had also been introduced in the fiddle class but it did not appeal to her particularly at the time. The example shows how Alison was normally very analytical about her fiddle playing. She stated, for instance, “The way I’m playing it’s bugging me a bit. I’m all right on the bottom two strings, I think; the tone’s quite good, but the top two strings and some of the change overs of style of playing – I’ve been going from long bows to short bows and stuff like that, or from one, eh, string to another – isn’t very good. So I’m just going to practise away at that”. It also illustrates how she added a considerable amount of ornamentation to the piece. This ornamentation can be visualised in the transcription of the tune in Appendix 7.



### Example 2 *Are Ye Sleepin' Maggie?*

Alison repeated phrases and sections of this tune many times in order to improve it. At one point when the practice session was not going well, she stated that she would “take a break mentally and see what happens”, and that she would then give the tune “a fresh go”. She found that this helped her to overcome the difficulties of learning certain tunes. As in the previous example, Alison added a good deal of ornamentation to the tune and was particularly concerned with her tone quality on certain strings.

## Item 6 Ken

### Example 1 *The Macleans of Ugadale*

This example highlights some of the practical difficulties that Ken characteristically faced in learning the fiddle. Ken explained that he did not receive the sheet music for the tunes which had been taught by the two teachers that had led the ALP fiddle class in the preceding few weeks. He stated that this “makes my practising really difficult”. As a result, he was forced to work out the notation for the reel “Pretty Peggy” (using his transcription method), and this process can be heard in Example 2. Firstly, though, he tried to learn a tune called “The Macleans of Ugadale”. This was his favourite kind of tune, a march. He stated that he had always liked this tune, and that he hoped that he knew it well enough in order to work it out on the fiddle. Although Ken was using the music to learn the tune, he was actually reading it mainly by the fingering which he had written above the stave (i.e. “learning by numbers”). He explained later on, however, that he could not have done this if he did not understand how the tune went to start with; i.e. he already knew how the tune sounded from previous hearings. Ken began by playing the tune pizzicato, possibly because this allowed him to concentrate on the left-hand fingering before he attempted the bowing, and divided the tune into sections to help him learn it.

### Example 2 *Pretty Peggy*

Ken explained that he had found a copy of “Pretty Peggy” in a book by Bill Hardie (see further the section on how Ken learned this tune in Chapter Five, pp. 192-194). To work out the tune, he listened to his tape recording of the teacher playing it and looked at the written music to, in his own words, “try and see if I can begin to get all the notes into my head”. This item shows how Ken typically made use of his tape recording from the fiddle class. He listened to the tape on headphones, rewound the tape and forwarded it as appropriate, and played pizzicato in accompaniment to it. Ken encountered problems, however, with the fact that there were different versions of this tune. Ken’s own transcription of “Pretty Peggy” may be found in Figure 5.3.

### Example 3 *Brenda Stubbart’s Reel* followed by *Ashokan Farewell*

This example illustrates two of the tunes which Ken called his “old favourites”: “Brenda Stubbart’s Reel” and “Ashokan Farewell”. He played them both by ear, and stated that he was reverting to them “just for a wee bit of relaxation”. (A transcription of Jim G.’s playing of the latter tune may be found in Appendix 7.)

## Appendix 4 iii.

### Copy of the Written Diary Guidance Sheet

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#### GUIDANCE FOR KEEPING THE WRITTEN DIARY

The purpose of keeping a written diary is to give you an opportunity to stand back a little from the detail of day-to-day practice as recorded on tape, and to draw out, or make more general comments about how you feel your playing is progressing. Please try to use the diary as a means of summarising or bringing together what you have said on the tape over the past week.

- Each time you write in your diary please **record the date and time**.

Jot your comments down in the diary in as little or as much detail as you like. Please **indicate how you think your practice has gone over the past week**. For example, do you think your playing has improved? Is a particular tune sounding better or worse than the previous week? What do you think you have achieved regarding your fiddle playing during the week?

- Please also **include your feelings** in these comments. For example, did you enjoy practising throughout the week? Did you experience any particularly positive feelings at any time? Were there particular feelings of concern?
- If you would like to write comments more frequently than once a week, please feel free to do so in the diary.

## Appendix 4 iv.

### Sample of extracts from the written diaries

START Monday 29<sup>th</sup> (KEN)

Week 29<sup>th</sup> April to May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Not A very good week of practice.

Happy to see Angus again as tutor but Teaching becoming disjuncted again - no music from previous weeks class AND 2 new tunes again for which no music given out.

Much Time wasted (could have been practicing properly) in working out notation from tape on one tune pretty reggy as class version differs from printed version.

Generally very tired when practicing & sound poor to me.

Nervous +++ in front of tape.

Tuesday 13/5/96 (ROY)

Away at Wexford & forgot Diary!

Getting more used to being recorded.

Still playing far faster than my ability lets me get away with.

Managed pretty much to get the 2 new tunes learned (although I had 2 weeks).

Feeling more happy with practice this week - probably a bit more relaxed about the microphone.

I find that when there is a (moderate) beat imposed on what I'm playing as by playing in class - I feel I'm playing better.

Can't write legibly yet though - perhaps another evening class is in order...

Now have 5 new tunes to learn from yesterday's class plus 3 on another sheet which we didn't learn. I am learning things slightly more quickly of late to try to learn as much as fast as possible since there are times I need to learn for half an hour playing next time in Brooman.

THURS 23 (ANDY)

MAY.

WAS HOPING TO PLAY A BIT LONGER BUT GOT FED UP BECAUSE I THOUGHT I WAS PLAYING BADLY. I SOMETIMES TRY TO PLAY THROUGH THE BAD PERIODS BUT TONIGHT I GOT FED UP I THINK IT STEMS FROM TRYING TO PLAY A BIT THAT I FIND DIFFICULT IN DRUMMOND CASTLE I KEEP TRYING BUT MY FINGERS JUST DONT WANT TO COORDINATE WITH THE BOW I'LL KEEP PLUCKING AWAY THOUGH BUT AT THE MOMENT IT FEELS LIKE I'LL NEVER GET IT SMOOTH.

WEEK 5 (JIM M.)

Reading some of the earlier times we learned at ALP missing the encouragement and enthusiasm of mixing with other players and from hearing music performed live. Frustrated at not having enough time to practise in a way which might improve my standard of playing — seem to be only maintaining current level.

## **Appendix 5 i.**

### **Interview One questions**

#### *Background*

- Why do you want to be able to play the fiddle?
- How long have you been learning the fiddle?
- Did your parents, or does anyone else in your family, play the fiddle?
- What influenced you to learn the fiddle?
- Can you play any other instruments?
- Why did you decide to come to ALP?
- How long have you been learning at ALP?
- Would you be interested in playing another type of music, for example classical music, or are you mainly interested in playing traditional fiddle music?
- Do you pursue an interest in traditional music in addition to your own playing, e.g. by following it on radio/television, going to concerts or sessions? Can you tell me about that?
- Have you ever considered giving up the instrument? Can you tell me about that?

#### *The fiddle classes*

- You have experienced a number of different teachers during the time you have been learning the fiddle at ALP. Does the particular teacher make any difference to you as a learner do you think?
- Have you had any difficulties in learning the fiddle so far? Can you tell me about these?
- Were there any reasons, in particular, that attracted you to learning music in a group situation?
- Do you find it helpful learning the fiddle in a group situation? Why/why not?
- Do you record the fiddle lesson? Can you tell me what you do with the recording when you take it home?

- Do you try to learn other tunes outwith the classes without the help of a teacher?  
How do you go about that?

### *Practice*

- How important do you think it is to practise the fiddle?
- How often do you practise and for how long?
- Say you attend a fiddle class and the teacher gives you a new tunes. Can you describe how you would go about tackling this new piece of music?
- Can you describe in detail what you normally do when you begin a practice session?
- How do you decide when to stop practising in any session?
- Do you have a routine you follow each time you practise?
- Do you normally learn a tune by ear or with music, or in any other way? Why do you approach learning in this/these ways?
- Do you have an ultimate goal in learning the fiddle?

## Appendix 5 ii.

### Interview Two questions

#### *Styles and repertoire*

- There are commonly thought to be a variety of different styles of fiddle playing for example, Cape Breton, West Highland, and Shetland. Do you, yourself, have a favourite style of fiddle playing?
- Are you conscious of trying to play in any particular style?
- Are you deliberately trying to put in ornamentation -- by that I mean grace notes, "hurruns"<sup>1</sup>, slides, or double stops -- into your playing? Can you tell me a bit about that?
- Do you only use the ornamentation that the teacher suggests or do you add in your own where you feel it is appropriate?
- Do you have a favourite type of tune, for example, a reel, strathspey, or a slow air?
- Can you tell me the names of some of your favourite tunes?
- And can you tell me the names of some tunes that you don't really like?
- What is it, do you think, that attracts you to some tunes and not to others?
- Is there any connection between the tunes you like and those you practise?

#### *Questions relating to participation in the study*

- How did you find having to tape your practice over the past few weeks?
- How did you feel about making comments on the tape regarding your playing?
- Did being part of the study make any difference to the amount of practice you normally do?
- Apart from having to speak aloud every so often, do you think that taping your practice for the purposes of the study made any difference to your normal practice routine? If so, how?

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<sup>1</sup> The term "hurrun" was used by one teacher that the learners had at ALP to refer to a mordent-like embellishment.



- Did you listen back to any of the recordings you made? What was your impression of them?
- Thinking back to when you very first started learning the fiddle, would your practice then have been much the same as it is now? If not, in what way/s would it have been different?
- How did you find keeping the written diary?
- Were there any ways in which you found keeping the diary a) helpful b) unhelpful?
- Do you think that being part of this study *has* changed the way in which you go about practising?
- Do you think that being part of this study *will* change the way you go about practising in the future?
- During the study I've been looking at six people individually but I'm also aware that you meet each other in the fiddle classes and outside the group. Did you swap or discuss your own experiences of taking part in the study with other members of the group?

### *Practice*

- For all of us, part of practice is our private playing at home. First of all, I am going to ask you a few questions about this activity.
- There are different views about what "to practise" means. For example, to some people, "to practise" refers to "learning a new piece", to others it is about refining particular skills e.g. bowing or fingering. Can you describe what "to practise" means for you?
- Some people usually find practice sessions enjoyable, others find them boring -- still others vary in their attitude. Thinking about the time before you took part in this study, would you say that you always enjoyed practising?
- What was your attitude to practising during the study period? Did this differ in any respect from how you normally view practice?
- We've been talking about playing the fiddle at home as practice during this study, but you also play in fiddle classes. Do you see this as practice?
- What about playing in a session in a pub? Would you consider this as practice?

- Thinking about being a member of the fiddle group, has your experience of the rest of the fiddle class had any influence on the length or the frequency of your practice sessions?
- And has your experience of the other members in the fiddle class had any influence on the style of your practice?

## Appendix 6 i.

### Copy of letter sent to Scots Music Organising Group Committee

Scots Music Organising Group Committee  
The Adult Learning Project  
184 Dalry Road  
Edinburgh EH11 2EP

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School of Scottish Studies  
27 George Square  
University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh EH8 9LD  
26 March 1996

Dear Committee Members,

I am currently a postgraduate student at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. My research, which will lead to the qualification of a PhD in ethnomusicology, addresses the issue of traditional music learning amongst adults in Scotland.

Over the past year I have been attending classes at the Adult Learning Project as a fiddle learner. In order to further my research, I would like to conduct an in-depth study with some of my class-mates in the intermediate fiddle class. So far, an informal approach has been made to the students I hope to study and their initial responses have proved promising. Before further information is sent out to these learners, however, I need the permission of the Scots Music Organising Group Committee to conduct the study.

Enclosed is a copy of the letter that I hope to send to my class-mates in which the form that the study will take is briefly outlined. The study should not disrupt the other members of the fiddle class or the teacher in any way. It is hoped that the results of the investigation will be significant not only to scholars but perhaps to other adults learning traditional music.

Please can you discuss this proposal at your next meeting and let me know, as soon as possible, if you are willing to allow me to conduct the study? I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for this purpose. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you very much in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Campbell

## Appendix 6 ii.

### Copy of letter of invitation sent to study participants

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School of Scottish Studies  
27 George Square  
University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh EH8 9LD

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently a postgraduate research student at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. As you know, I have been attending the intermediate fiddle class at the Adult Learning Project for some time. Through my experiences as a learner with yourself and others in the fiddle class, I have become interested in looking at how adults go about learning the fiddle.

It is for this reason that I would like to ask you to consider being part of a doctoral study which addresses this issue. There are three things you will be invited to do for the study:

- Take part in interviews regarding your fiddle playing
- Keep a written diary once a week (or more often if you feel the inclination!) of your playing/practice
- Tape your practice sessions on tapes which I will supply

The study will commence at the beginning of next term and finish at the end of June. Please can you fill in the sheet overleaf indicating whether you are willing to consider taking part in this study, and return it to me in the envelope provided. If you are willing to get involved, I will contact you before the beginning of next term to chat about this further. In the meantime, if you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Best wishes,

Katherine Campbell

(Appendix 6 ii. continued)

**Please delete as appropriate**

**I am / am not willing to consider taking part in this study.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6 iii.

### List of recorded interviews undertaken during the core investigation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Recording</u>	<u>School of Scottish Studies</u> <u>Archive Number</u> (where applicable)
Jim G.	19/4/96	His home, Edinburgh	SA1996.33
Alison	24/4/96	Her home, Edinburgh	SA1996.33
Jim M.	26/4/96	University of Edinburgh	SA1996.33
Andy	27/4/96	University of Edinburgh	SA1996.38
Roy	2/5/96	University of Edinburgh	SA1996.38/39
Ken	16/5/96	University of Edinburgh	SA1996.38
Jim M.	18/6/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a
Andy	22/6/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a
Roy	25/6/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a
Jim G.	27/6/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a
Ken	27/6/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a
Alison	9/10/96	University of Edinburgh	n/a

## Appendix 6 iv.

### List of other interviews

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Recording/Interview</u>	<u>School of Scottish Studies Archive Number</u> (where applicable)
ALP Learners	29/5/95	Fiddler's Arms, Grassmarket, Edinburgh	n/a
Gordon Easton	11/10/95	His home, Strichen, Fraserburgh	SA1995.141
Dave Francis	17/2/98	Scottish Arts Council Office, Edinburgh	n/a
Angus Grant (senior)	14/12/95	His home, Fort William	n/a
Bert Murray	18/10/95	His home, Aberdeen	SA1995.152
Rob Paul	30/11/95	Centre for Continuing Education, University of Edinburgh	n/a
Stan Reeves	23/5/95	Adult Learning Project Shop, Edinburgh	n/a
Stan Reeves	3/8/98	Phone conversation	n/a



Appendix 7

Transcriptions of tunes<sup>1</sup>

The Boys of Ballymot (As played by Andy)

Bennachie Sunrise (As played by Roy)

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that all the transcriptions in this section are approximate.

The Ale is Dear (As played by Roy)

Handwritten musical score for "The Ale is Dear" in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff contains the first measure with an accent on the first eighth note. The second staff continues the melody with a wavy line above a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff shows a first ending bracket over a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a second ending bracket. The fourth staff concludes with a double bar line and the handwritten words "(last time)" and "fine".

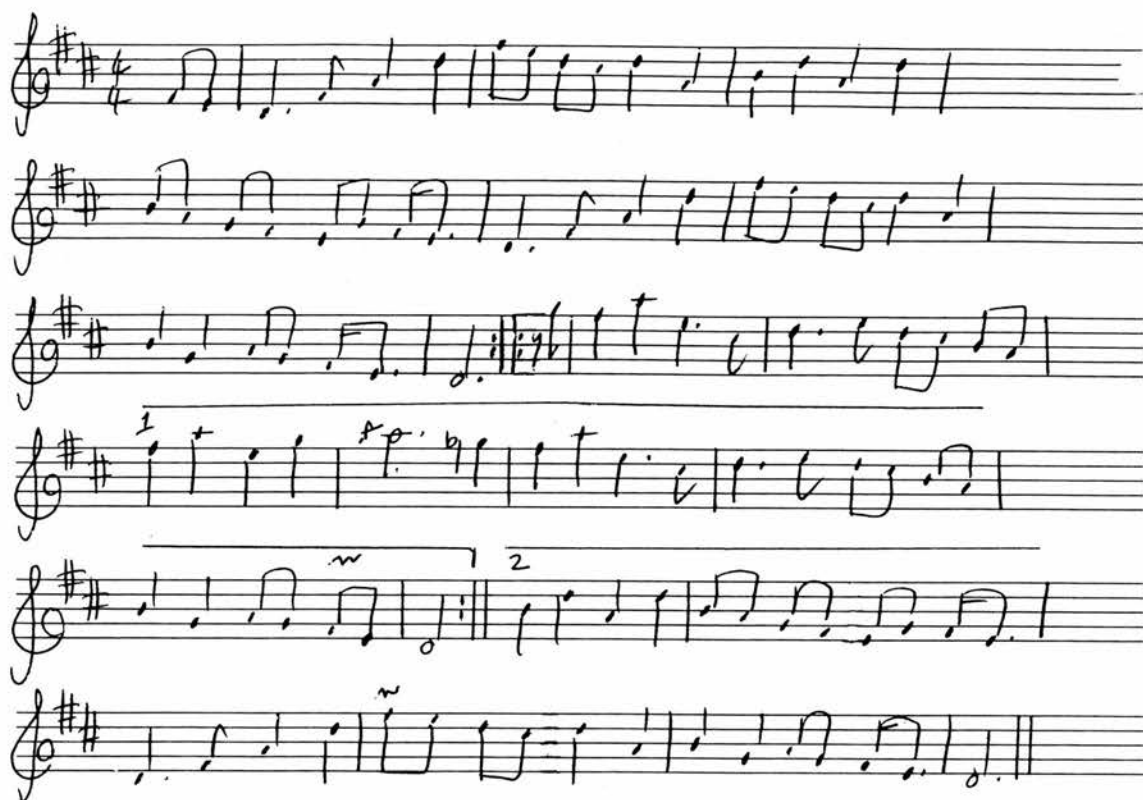
Ashokan Farewell (As played by Jim G.)

Handwritten musical score for "Ashokan Farewell" in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 3/4 time. The score consists of five staves. The first staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff features first and second ending brackets. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff shows a key signature change to D minor (one sharp) for the final measure. The fifth staff ends with a double bar line and the handwritten word "slowly" above a trill symbol.

Aros Park (As played by Jim G.)

Handwritten musical score for "Aros Park" in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 2/4 time. The score consists of 12 staves of music. It features various musical notations including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and fingerings (1, 2, 3). There are also trill-like markings (wavy lines) and a repeat sign with first and second endings. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

# Da Slockit Light (As played by Jim M.)



# Morrison's Jig (As played by Jim M.)

(last time through, play as written and end at 3)

1st time (return to start)

2nd time through go to

fine

Kenny Gillies of Portnalong (As played by Jim M.)

Handwritten musical score for "Kenny Gillies of Portnalong" in treble clef, key of D major (F# C# G#), and 6/8 time. The score consists of seven staves of music. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and various ornaments (accents and grace notes). The first staff begins with a treble clef, key signature of three sharps, and a 6/8 time signature. The music concludes with a double bar line on the seventh staff.

Are Ye Sleepin' Maggie? (As played by Alison)



The Longhope Lifeboat Disaster (As played by Alison)



The Macleans of Ugadale (As played by Ken)





Brenda Stubbart's Reel (As played by Ken)

Handwritten musical score for Brenda Stubbart's Reel, in 2/4 time. The score consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff continues the melody and includes a handwritten annotation "(last time)" with a fermata symbol over the final measure. The fifth staff continues the melody and includes a handwritten annotation "(return to beginning)" with a fermata symbol over the final measure. The sixth staff continues the melody. The seventh staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.